WAIT, THERE'S MORE? DIDN'T ROBERT KIRKMAN SAY ENOUGH ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE? DOES THIS GUY JUST LIKE SEEING THE INK OF HIS OWN WORDS OR SOMETHING? MAYBE SO, BUT THIS IS **THE WALKING DEAD DELUXE**, AND IF WE JUST STOPPED AT A MEASLY LETTER IN THE BACK FROM ME AND WENT ABOUT OUR MERRY WAY, IT WOULDN'T REALLY BE ALL THAT DELUXE NOW WOULD IT?

I MEAN, SURE, THESE FABULOUS COLORS FROM THE ESTEEMED MR. DAVE MCCAIG ARE THE MAIN EVENT, BUT IF WE'RE GOING TO CELEBRATE THIS SERIES WHILE WE RERELEASE IT, THERE NEEDS TO BE A LITTLE SOMETHING MORE, RIGHT? MAYBE AN EXCLUSIVE PEEK BEHIND THE SCENES ON AN ISSUE-BY-ISSUE BASIS? SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

WELL, THAT BRINGS US TO **THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR**.

SO WHAT THE HECK IS **THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR** ANYWAY?

WELL, EVERY SINGLE ISSUE OF **THE WALKING DEAD**, FROM ISSUE #1 ALL THE WAY UP TO ISSUE #193 AND INCLUDING ALL THE SPECIALS AND SHORT STORIES ALONG THE WAY, ALL STARTED... ON PAPER. THAT'S RIGHT, THIS WHOLE SERIES WAS PLOTTED OUT, ON PAPER, WITH A PENCIL, BY ME. LIKE SOME KIND OF OLD TIMEY, LONG-HAND, DICKENSIAN NONSENSE. I AM AN OLD MAN AND AM ONLY GETTING OLDER, IT'S VERY SAD.

FUN FACT (OR MAYBE NOT): EACH ONE OF THESE HANDWRITTEN PLOTS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN WITH THE SAME PENCIL. HOW CRAZY IS THAT? MY DAD GAVE ME THIS PENTEL 0.7MM MECHANICAL PENCIL WHEN I WAS IN THE 7TH GRADE, SOMETIME AROUND 1991 OR SO. I'VE HAD IT EVER SINCE, AND WHEN I STARTED WRITING COMICS, I USED IT FOR EVERYTHING I DID BECAUSE IT WAS A GOOD, RELIABLE PENCIL... AND STILL IS, NEARLY 30 YEARS LATER. THAT IS ONE RELIABLE PENCIL. YES, SIR, PENTEL IS THE BEST. I SURE WOULD BE A GOOD SPOKESPERSON FOR THAT BRAND OF MECHANICAL PENCIL. HOO BOY!

THAT PENCIL, I FEAR, HAS BECOME LIKE SAMSON'S HAIR FOR ME. AT THIS POINT, I WORRY THAT I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO WRITE WITHOUT IT. I'M NOT REALLY A SUPERSTITIOUS PERSON, BUT I DO ALLOW MYSELF THAT ONE LITTLE BIT OF QUACKERY. SO AT THIS POINT I'M VERY CAREFUL TO MAKE SURE THAT PENCIL GETS USED ON EVERY PROJECT SMALL OR LARGE... JUST IN CASE. EVEN WITH THE WONDER OF THE MODERN IPAD, I STILL PLOT ALL MY WORK ON PAPER... WITH THAT PENCIL.

FOR ME, WORKING ON PAPER IS JUST EASIER. IT HELPS ME ORGANIZE MY THOUGHTS IN A CLEAR, VIEWABLE WAY AND ALLOWS ME TO STRUCTURE THE STORY HOW I LIKE. IT ALSO HELPS ME SEE THE WHOLE ISSUE IN ONE IMAGE, SO I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING AND WHAT I'M COVERING. IT HELPS ME MAKE SURE THE ISSUE IS INTERESTING. THAT'S IMPORTANT.

MANY TIMES I'VE BEGAN PLOTTING AN ISSUE, GOTTEN TO PAGE 10 OR SO, COVERING WHAT I PLAN ON COVERING, WHEN I REALIZE, "OOOH, THIS LOOKS LIKE IT MIGHT BE A BORING ISSUE, I NEED TO SPICE THIS UP," AND I'LL GO BACK AND ADD SOMETHING EXCITING.

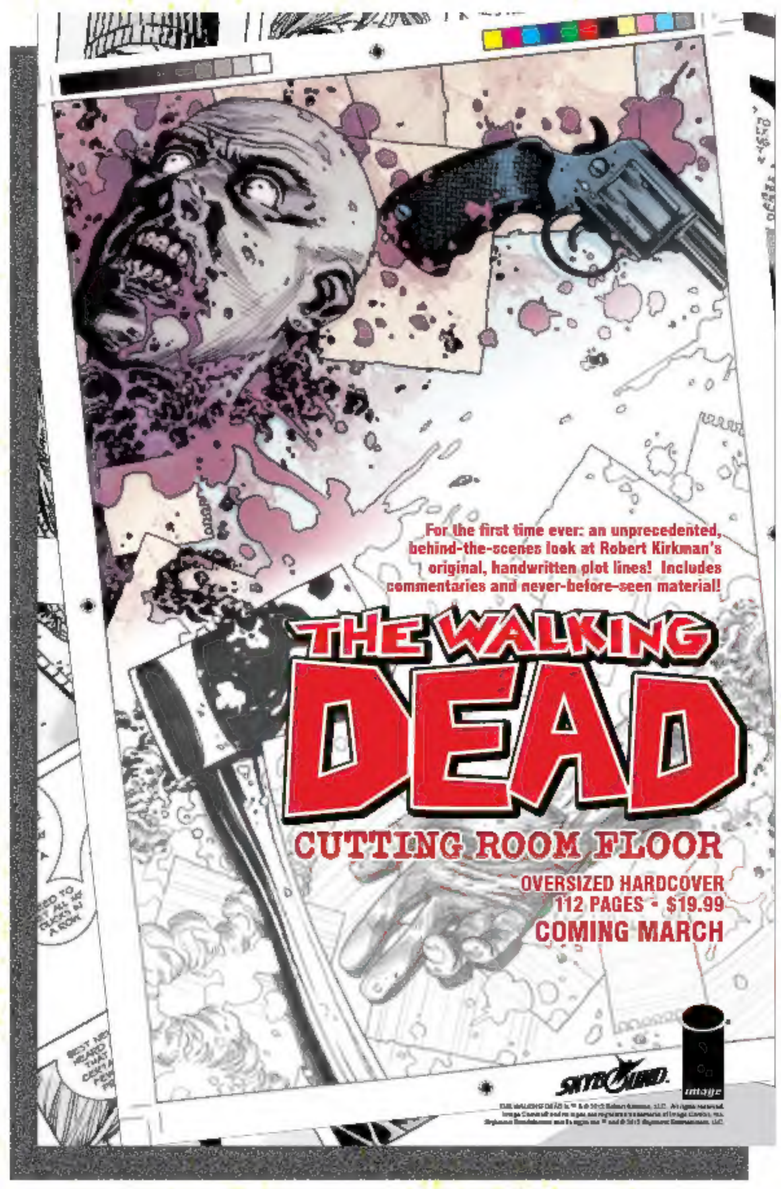
IN COMICS, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS ABOUT THE FORMAT FOR ME IS WRITING TO PAGE TURNS. YOUR EVEN-NUMBERED PAGES ARE ALWAYS PAGE TURNS, AND THAT'S WHERE YOU CAN HIDE YOUR EXCITING, SURPRISING MOMENTS. IF SOMETHING EXCITING HAPPENS ON AN ODD-NUMBERED PAGE, WELL, YOU'RE GOING TO SEE THAT WHILE YOU'RE READING THE PAGE BEFORE IT. IF IT'S ON A PAGE TURN, WELL... THEN YOU GET TO SURPRISE THE READER IMMEDIATELY. ONE OF THE MANY THINGS I LEARNED FROM ERIK LARSEN.

SO WHEN YOU SEE THESE PLOTS, YOU'LL SEE THAT I START BY NUMBERING THE PAGE 1-22 DOWN THE LEFT-HAND SIDE OF THE PAGE. THAT ALLOWS ME TO BLOCK IN PAGE TURNS THAT I KNOW I HAVE PLANNED. UNFORTUNATELY, IT WON'T BE CLEAR WHAT ORDER I WRITE THE PLOTS IN. I DEFINITELY JUMP AROUND. THERE HAVE BEEN MORE THAN A FEW ISSUES WHERE I STARTED AT PAGE 16, KNOWING I HAD A BIG PAGE TURN MOMENT THERE. THEN I'D BUILD THE ISSUE TO THAT MOMENT, ONCE IT'S MORE OR LESS SET

IN STONE. OFTENTIMES I'LL START WITH PAGE 22. I WOULD OFTEN BEGIN AN ISSUE KNOWING WHAT MY FINAL CLIFFHANGER WOULD BE, SO I'D JUST JOT THAT DOWN FIRST AND THEN STRUCTURE THE ISSUE AS A SLOW MARCH TO THAT MOMENT. THE PURPOSE OF SUBPLOTS WOULD SOMETIMES BE TO STALL AND FILL OUT AN ISSUE, MAKING SURE THERE WAS ENOUGH HAPPENING BEFORE THAT FINAL PAGE. THEN THOSE SUBPLOTS WOULD SET SOMETHING UP THAT WOULD BECOME A LATTER CLIFFHANGER.

I'VE OFTEN TALKED ABOUT HOW SOMETIMES I KNOW A PLOT WELL IN ADVANCE AND AM BUILDING TO IT, AND OTHER TIMES I'M MAKING IT UP AS I GO ALONG OR DRASTICALLY ALTERING MY PLANS AS I GO. IT REALLY HELPED ME KEEP THE BOOK GOING, KNOWING I HAD A SOLID PLOT WORKED OUT THAT I COULD FOLLOW, BUT KEEPING THINGS INTERESTING ALONG THE WAY BY SOMETIMES BLOWING THAT PLOT UP ON A WHIM. THAT'S WHEN THE SERIES WAS MOST EXCITING FOR ME, WHEN SOMETHING NEW AND BETTER WOULD COME TO ME AND REPLACE A PRIOR PLAN.

AT SOME POINT NEARLY A DECADE AGO, I DECIDED IT MIGHT BE COOL TO SHARE ALL THESE PLOTS WITH THE FINE READERS OF THIS SERIES, AND ACTUALLY SHOW THEM SOME OF THE DETOURS I MADE ALONG THE WAY, GOING OVER THE VARIOUS CHANGES THAT WERE MADE AND WHY, A PEEK BEHIND THE CURTAIN AND THINGS LEFT ON THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR. SO WE ANNOUNCED A BOOK BY THAT VERY SAME NAME THAT WAS MEANT TO COLLECT THE FIRST 50 OR SO PLOTS FROM THIS SERIES. IT WOULD TURN OUT THAT THE PLAN WAS SOMEWHAT ILL CONCEIVED.



AT THE TIME I WAS SPENDING A LOT OF TIME ON SET OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS WALKING DEAD TV SHOW AND I WAS IN THE WRITER'S ROOM FULLTIME, ALL WHILE TRYING TO KEEP THE COMIC ON TRACK. LET ME TELL YOU, KEEPING CHARLIE ADLARD STOCKED WITH SCRIPT IS A MONUMENTAL TASK. I WOULD OFTENTIMES COME HOME FROM THE WRITER'S ROOM, SEE MY WIFE AND KIDS FOR DINNER AND THE EVENING. THEN AFTER THEY ALL WENT TO BED, I'D STAY UP LATE AND WRITE THREE PAGES OR SO TO KEEP CHARLIE BUSY. BECAUSE OF THE TIME ZONES, MY LOS ANGELES MIDNIGHT WAS CHARLIE'S ENGLAND 8 A.M. SO HE'D PUT IN A SOLID EIGHT HOUR SHIFT WHILE I WAS ASLEEP, AND I'D WAKE UP TO THE THREE PAGES I WROTE THE NIGHT BEFORE, COMPLETELY DRAWN AND WAITING IN MY INBOX AS I WOKE UP TO GO BACK INTO THE WRITER'S ROOM. IT WAS AN INTERESTING TIME THAT HAD ME VERY MUCH TREADING WATER.

SO, NEEDLESS TO SAY, TIME WAS SHORT AND THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR BOOK QUICKLY FELL BEHIND SCHEDULE AND BECAME A THING I WOULD GET ASKED ABOUT AT EVERY SINGLE CONVENTION APPEARANCE. I WOULD ALWAYS SAY I WAS HARD AT WORK ON IT (I WAS NOT) AND THAT IT WOULD COME OUT EVENTUALLY (IT DID NOT). EVENTUALLY, AFTER A YEAR OR SO OF NOT BEING ABLE TO FIND THE TIME TO ASSEMBLE MY PLOTS AND WRITE COMMENTARY ON EACH ONE... THE BOOK WAS ABANDONED.

I ALWAYS REGRETTED THAT. IT WAS A COOL IDEA, AND I KNOW, AS A FAN MYSELF, I'D LOVE TO SEE A SIMILAR BOOK FOR A SERIES I ENJOYED. SO IT WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING I WANTED TO DO.

OVER THE YEARS I CHIPPED AWAY AT IT, GETTING A LITTLE (VERY LITTLE) WORK DONE ON IT HERE AND THERE. BUT NEVER ENOUGH TO FEEL COMFORTABLE THAT THE RELEASE OF THE BOOK WAS FORTHCOMING. IT JUST SEEMED LIKE TOO MUCH OF A TASK.

THEN THE IDEA FOR THE WALKING DEAD DELUXE CAME ALONG. IT SEEMED LIKE THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR THIS MATERIAL TO SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY. THE SINGLE-ISSUE RELEASE SCHEDULE WOULD ALLOW ME TO CHIP AWAY AT IT, LITTLE BY LITTLE, MONTH BY MONTH. SO IT MAKES THE PROJECT NOT SO INSURMOUNTABLE. ALSO, I'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO REALLY DIG IN, AND GIVE MY THOUGHTS ON WHAT WENT INTO THE STORY FOR EACH ISSUE.

HOPEFULLY, IT'LL BE A FUN EXPERIENCE HAD BY ALL.

TURN THE PAGE AND DIVE INTO THE OVERLY COMPLEX AND DEFINITELY PLANNED TO BE HISTORIC PLOT FOR ISSUE #1.

ENJOY!

-ROBERT KIRKMAN

ISSUE 1
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

THE WALKING DEAD #1

"SO, I GUESS YOU WERE A COP."

"THEY SAY OUR GENERATION HAD IT EASY SOMETHING HAD TO GIVE...

1. FLASH BACK RICK GETTING SHOT.
2. WAKE UP IN HOSPITAL, REMOVE IV GET DRESSED
3. SEARCH HOSPITAL FINDS DEAD BODY.
4.
5. "JESUS... WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED HERE?"
6.
7. SPREAD? SHELTER ROOM. ZOMBIE LOCK OFF.
8. RUNNING AWAY. TRIPPING STUMBLING. FALLS INTO STAIR CASE.
9. DOWNSTAIRS TO GARAGE. WIDE PANEL AT BOTTOM.
10. CHECKS CARS... STARTS WALKING.
11. SEES KID ON SIDE OF THE ROAD. GOES TO TAKE BIKE.
12. KID STARTS MOVING. TURNS IN HORROR... RIDES OFF ON BIKE.
13. ARRIVES HOME. NOBODY THERE. LOOKS AROUND. GOES IN GARAGE.
14. GOES INTO BACK YARD. GETS BEANED.
15. BLACK DUDE AND KID. "OH SHIT."
16. GET HIM IN THE HOUSE.
17. RICK WAKES UP. BIG TALK.
18. MORE TALKING. "SO, YOU WERE A COP?" "WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST CLUE?"
19. LAUGHS "RICK HOLDS UP KEYS" WANNA GO SHOPPING?"
20. ARRIVE AT POLICE STATION. CHECK THE DESKS.
21. IN WEAPONS ROOM GATHERING GUNS
22. GASING UP CARS. SAYING GOODBYES
23. LEAVING... STOPS CAR GETS OUT.
24. TOP PANEL KID ZOMBIE AGAIN SHOOTS, CRYS... DRIVES OFF.

I think the first thing worth mentioning off the bat is that before this series began, I had a conversation with Erik Larsen about how he always seemed to start a comic with a splash page, followed by a double-page spread. He mentioned how in his view, that got you into the story quicker, that by page 4 when you actually started reading panels, you were already invested. Up until that point, that was how I liked to tell stories, too. I was very much in line with the Larsen method.

He pointed out, in contrast, that Todd McFarlane preferred to start his stories with a ton of words. Most of his page 1s were very dense and covered with a ton of dialogue or captions. Todd's thinking was that he wanted people to feel like they had gotten their money's worth by page 2. I commented on how, as a fan, I'd always considered Todd's first pages a steep barrier of entry, and how I found it kind of off-putting. Erik laughed and agreed but added, "Todd's work has always outsold mine."

So when I started THE WALKING DEAD, I wanted to try something different. I wanted to pack as many words on a page as I could, just to

see if that resulted in higher sales... and well, you know the rest.

Let's dive in! I think my handwriting, while messy, is readable, but your mileage may vary.

In the top right-hand corner, I'll often write some quick dialogue I plan on putting in the issue, you'll see that on most of these plots. These two bits here didn't really make it into the issue... but when I started, I thought they were important enough to jot down early so I wouldn't forget.

Looking at this plot, it's interesting how MUCH changed between the plot and the script. Bicycle Girl was originally intended to be a kid. Between the plot and the script, I decided an adult woman cyclist would be sadder, or have more of an emotional connection to Rick? Don't know if I agree with that at this point, might have been better as a kid. The big splash page of zombies in the cafeteria was originally intended to be a two-page spread, but at the same time, there wasn't another zombie interaction at the police station originally, so I had to rearrange everything to add that in.

You can see how things just kept getting moved up. Rick was originally supposed to be in Morgan's house on page 17, but that happens two pages earlier.

And yes, Morgan was originally referred to as "black guy" in the plot. Morgan was meant to be a Romero tribute character in a lot of ways. In all three core Romero zombie movies, the coolest, most capable character is "the black guy". So I knew I wanted to introduce a strong black character right away. I told Tony to draw him "like a young Morgan Freeman" and the name just stuck. The last name and his son's first name, "Duane Jones", is an obvious reference to the fantastic actor who played Ben in *Night of The Living Dead*.

NOTE for TV fans: on page 5 you'll note the missing "DON'T DEAD OPEN INSIDE" (heh) sign on the cafeteria doors. That was an adaptation of the "ALL DEAD DO NOT ENTER" sign that comes into play later in the comic series that was moved up to the pilot episode.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Very proud of myself for making this scene one page. I don't think I would cram it all into one page these days. Was I a better writer in my younger days? Sigh.

4: Note how I moved "Finds dead body" to the page turn.

8: When I scripted this scene, I added the zombie tumbling with Rick and breaking his neck to make things more exciting.

10: Decided to spend less time in the garage so we could spend more time with Bicycle Girl.

11: Now I realize I probably changed Bicycle Kid to Bicycle Girl so that Rick could actually ride the bike. It'd be harder and kind of goofy for him to be riding a little kid's bike to his house. Good call, old Robert. And points to Tony for correctly drawing a woman's bike. I don't think I even knew they were different back then.

14-16: All this clearly needed less space than I plotted for. I was ultimately able to squeeze it all onto one page.

17: When I write something like "big talk" in a plot, I have a pretty solid idea of what needs to be said here and "big talk" is meant to remind me, "Hey, dummy, this is where that big talk goes."

20-24: So this area in the plot is SUPER cramped. I don't think I ever thought I'd be able to fit everything there. So what I'll do is I'll just finish out the plot, listing the important information I want in those pages, but as I'm writing I'll try to move scenes up and use less pages as I'm going to open up the end. That's how the plot for pages 14-16 ends up being page 14 in script form. So by the time I'm writing the end of the script, the plot for page 20 ends up on page 17, allowing me to add in another cool zombie moment and expand Rick's final interaction with Bicycle Girl, or as she appears in the plot "kid zombie".

I see that this plot ends with "shoots, crys (sic)... drives off." It's a pretty cold way to plot out what was always meant to be a pretty emotional scene to end the issue. You're going to see a lot of that as we go. These plots are very much my shorthand just to let me know what page certain things fall on. They will seem hilariously cold at times. So buckle up.

And after years and years of autocorrect... my spelling will also be a source if ridicule, so by all means, have at it.

I've never really ended a plot with that squiggly underline before... maybe I knew this issue was special even back then.

WRITE TO US AT: **WALKINGDEAD@SKYBOUND.COM**

The first time I experienced THE WALKING DEAD, it wasn't because I picked up one of the many ways the series is published (digital, physical, singles, trades, compendiums... however you want to read it, we deliver), it was because my friend finally convinced me to download this video game, TELLTALE'S THE WALKING DEAD.

"Do I have to know anything about the comic?" I asked.

"No," he said, "but you should give it a try, because the comics are really good."

I googled it; there were over 100 issues at the time, and I was a starving college student. I put it on the back burner for a time when I had a little more cash in my pocket.

This turned out to be a big mistake. In part because several years later I would begin my first job as the assistant editor at Skybound and need to learn everything I could about THE WALKING DEAD in a week (so many zombies and so little time), but mostly because my friend was right. The comics are really good. I mean, *really good*. I should have read them earlier just so I could enjoy them earlier.

By the time I started working at Skybound, there were over 140 issues of THE WALKING DEAD, and I wasn't sure how I would catch up in time to do my job. My marathon reading sprint took me to Hershel's farm, and a prison and a sick little town called Woodbury and a beautiful little town called Alexandria, and all the wide-open, life-threatening spaces in between. It introduced me to Andrea and Ezekiel and Negan and of course, Rick Grimes. It was a beautiful and terrifying world I had been invited into, one I nearly missed because I thought I had missed the beginning.

Who knew that the beginning would come a second time? It's a new journey for me in color—a perspective to a dear and familiar world that I've never had before (I thought Andrea's hair was red for a very, very long time). Whether you've read the series a thousand times, or finally decided to pick up that title you've been seeing on the rack in the comic book store for the past sixteen years, I hope it's a new journey for you, too. Maybe grab a friend who could use a good story and enjoy it together.

Just tell them, "You should really give it a try, because the comics are really good. There are 193 issues just waiting to be devoured and enjoyed."

Arielle Basich
Too Hot California

ISSUE 2
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

THE WALKING DEAD #2

"WHAT'S THAT, BOY?" "YOU WANT TO HEAR ABOUT WHEN MY SON WAS BORN?" "SURE. TALKING ABOUT THE HAPPIEST DAY OF MY LIFE WILL TAKE MY MIND OFF THIS FUCKED UP SITUATION WE'RE ALL IN."

1. DRIVING FOUR PANELS
2. CAR BROKE DOWN. SPLASH.
3. STARTS WALKING SEES HOUSE. W/ BARN...
4. GOES IN HOUSE, TEORE DEAD IN BOTTOM PANEL - SUICIDE.
5. OUT TO BARN. HORSE IN BOTTOM PANEL. LARGE "HELLO."
6. GATHERING STUFF FROM HORSE. SADDLE HATLMET... STUFF.
7. RIDES OFF. BALK ON ROAD STARTS TALKING TO HORSE
8. MORE TALKING W/ HORSE.
9. SLEEPING W/ HORSE. IN ABANDONED CAR.
10. BALK TO RIDING.
11. ARRIVE IN TOWN.
12. SPLASH BIG ~~DESTROYED~~ SERIED CITY.
13. ZOMBLES A STIRRING
14. ZOMBIES ATTACK
15. TRIES TO GET AWAY... OVERWHELMED THROWN OF HORSE.
16. RUNS GETS GRABBED BY GUY.
17. FOLLOW ME.
18. RUNS TO FIRE ESCAPE.
19. ON ROOF.
20. ESCAPE OUT OF CITY.
21. WALK IN WOODS BALK TO CAMP.
22. WIFE + KID! WOO!

END

Continuing the discussion from last issue. While I was definitely TRYING to put as many words on the pages as possible in this series to see if the "McFarlane writing style" was successful, the opening of this issue was much more in line with Erik Larsen's style, which is more or less my preferred writing style. Lots of open pages to let the art do its job, and Tony did a GREAT job on this issue.

Oh, and one bit I'm actually proud of in this issue is all the dialogue about Rick's wife and son possibly being dead in Atlanta, then the transition to "maybe they weren't there". I feel like in most stories Rick would then spend issue after issue searching for his family, if not the whole series. So it's a very effective misdirect that leads to a very happy ending! We really ended issue №2 with a happy ending? Why did people think this series was so depressing?! Come on!

Okay, let's dive in! I think my handwriting, while messy, is readable, but your mileage may vary.

In the top righthand corner, I'll often write some quick dialogue I plan on putting in the issue, you'll see that on most of these plots. That stilted bit where Rick just starts randomly talking to a horse (I mean, it's not THAT bad, right?) I came up with that while doing the plot and had to scrawl it down in the top righthand corner because I didn't know where it would fall in the issue and I didn't want to forget it.

This plot was more or less followed exactly until page 8. Originally page 9 and 10 were to feature Rick sleeping in an abandoned car that the horse was tied to. It would have shown more time passing in the journey, but ultimately, as I was writing the script and refining my plot, I realized that I needed more space for the things at the end.

PAGE NOTES:

9: He's not "sleeping with a horse in an abandoned car" as the plot says, that was just my shorthand. Get your minds out of the gutter!

10: Thankfully I cut the extra page or Rick riding the horse to Atlanta.

11: "Arrive in town", humble beginnings for the panel that became the iconic poster for season 1 of the show. Had I known what a moment that would be built up to being in the show (so, if I were a better writer, I guess) I would have made this a page turn splash page. It certainly deserved it. Oh well.

12: I was building to this big page turn zombie reveal, though... and that's worth it. Notice "destroyed" city is crossed out and changed to "deserted". I'd considered having the city be a bombed-out wasteland but eventually changed my mind.

15: Look, I know that should read "thrown OFF horse." We all make mistakes. There will be plenty of bad grammar and misspellings to be made fun of during this process, so buckle up.

16: "Grabbed by guy." That, ladies and gentlemen, is the birth of our beloved character GLENN on paper. Such humble beginnings. You'll notice as we go I RARELY have a name for any characters at this stage in the process. I would usually name them as I was typing the script. And often times I just quickly throw out a random name like GLENN intending to come up with something better or more meaningful later... and then don't.

19-21: So clearly in the script phase all this was expanded into what we have in the final issue. Rick's breakdown over Lori and Carl, all that discussion was added in after the plot was done. This is more or less how revisions work in my process. The plot you see here is a roadmap, but I alter things quite a bit while I'm typing things out.

22: "Wife and Kid! Woo!" I'm not even sure I had "Lori and Carl" at this point. Actually, I'm pretty sure I didn't. Lori was named Carol in the original pitch document for the series.

So, not a lot of big sweeping changes left on the cutting room floor this issue. Pretty much by the numbers. That won't be the case for every issue, though. Trust me.

ISSUE 3
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

THE WALKING DEAD #3

1. MEET + GREET CONTINUE FROM ISSUE 2.
2. INTRODUCTIONS. SHOW EVERYONE, FAT GUY, OLD MAN.
3. TOUR OF CAMP, "YOU'VE GOT SOME CATCHING UP TO DO".
4. CATCHING UP OUTSIDE TENT, UNWRAPPING HAND.
5. "YOU'RE SHAKING." "I HAVENT HAD TIME TO BE SCARED."
6. WAKE UP THE NEXT MORNING. LOOK AT WIFE + SON.
7. SHANE: "WE'RE GOING HUNTING."
8. GOOD BYE TO WIFE + SON. SET UP LOOKOUT. "OLD MAN WARNS RICK ABOUT SHANE."
9. OFF TO HUNT.
10. LORI GOING TO WASH CLOTHES. TELLS CARL TO STAY IN THE CAMP.
11. WALKING TO STREAM. IT'S CLOSE BY.
12. KIDS PLAYING. "YOU THINK MY DADDY'S COMIN BACK TOO?"
13. MORE KIDS PLAYIN.
14. HUNTIN'
15. HUNTIN'
16. HUNTIN' FIND ZOMBIE EATING DEAR.
17. LORI TALKING.
18. ZOMBIE APROACHING. CARRYING LAUNDRY BACK TO CAMP.
19. COME INTO CAMP. KIDS STARTLED BY YELLING. ZOMBIE ABOUT TO ATTACK IN LAST PANEL. "MOVE!"
20. OLD MAN CHOPS INTO HEAD W/ AXE. LITTLE CARL COMES RUNNING.
21. FIND DEER KILL IT.
22. ~~KILL DEER~~ PACKING UP BODY, DRAGGING AWAY FROM CAMP.
23. RICK + SHANE DRAGGING DEER, SEE ZOMBIE... "WHAT HAPPENED?"
24. RUNS TO LORI + CARL. "WE'RE FINE" "WE'RE FINE"

CAMP:
- RICK, LORI, CARL,
- SHANE.
- CAROL, SOPHIA
- FAT GUY (ALLEN) DONNA - WIFE. TWINS. (BEN + BILLY)
- GLENN.
- DALE (OLD MAN W/ CAMPER)
- JIM (GOT OUT OF ATLANTA, CRAZY)
- SISTERS, AMY, ANDREA.

15 PEOPLE

Well, I'll just dive right in on the cringe-worthy laundry discussion. Did I need a full page of the female characters talking about doing laundry while the men hunted? Probably not. In my defense, I knew that if this series lasted past issue №6 (which at this point was not a given) I was going to take the female characters in some interesting directions as the series progressed. So starting them here would give me a lot of room to grow and evolve along the way. Anyway, I was 23 when I started writing this comic so this is definitely not the last cringe-worthy thing (for me at least) that I wrote into this book.

I'd have handled things a little differently had I written it today. I'd have maybe had Allen or Jim help with the laundry.

More or less this issue follows the plot closely. I'd originally plotted this issue to be 24 pages but was able to cut the Carl and Sophia scene from two pages down to one. As well as trimming the "huntin'" scene down by a page.

At this plotting stage, I didn't have the idea for the head to be alive after being decapitated by Dale. I probably realized the head would still be alive because of my attempt to canonize the Romero Rules with this series, and added that stuff then.

Also, originally Shane and Rick were going to bring the deer back to camp and eat it despite the zombie having gnawed on it. I figured that was a little too gross and decided against it.

PAGE NOTES:

2: Yep, "Old man" and "Fat Guy"--the characters always start in the most original places.

4: Fun fact: I hadn't planned for Rick to get his wedding ring back in this issue and I don't even think that moment was in the script. Tony brought it up to me as a question when he was drawing the page of Rick and Lori in front of the tent. Realizing, yes, Rick should get his wedding ring at some point and this is really the only time to be able to do it, I told Tony to add a panel to that page and I'd make it work in the dialogue. I probably should have given that moment more room. It's kind of weird that more time is given to him unwrapping his hand than getting his wedding ring back, eh... regrets.

5: At the time I thought "I haven't had time to be scared" was a really cool and haunting line of dialogue. I have ALWAYS been a fan of the movie *Predator*... like... everyone else... and I don't know why it didn't dawn on me that its similarity to the famous Jesse Ventura line from that movie, "I don't have time to bleed" makes it seem a little silly. Regrets.

10: This is historic. Definitely the first note of any character telling Carl to stay in anywhere.

16: Cut me some slack, I spelled DEER correctly TWICE after this goof.

24: When I write "we're fine, we're fine" for the final page of the issue here, I know that this is going to be said against a shot of Shane leering at them, showing that things are definitely NOT fine. So sometimes you'll see things like that that aren't in the plot because I didn't bother writing them down because I knew I wouldn't forget what went there. Now that I'm... a little... older... I don't really take such risks with my current plots because there have been times in the past where I've been writing a script staring at my plot saying out loud, "What did you want here?! What is this scene? What does this mean?"

At the end of the plot here, you'll see a breakdown of the characters introduced in this issue. This was where I finally buckled down and made myself give people names. It even lists Jim's back story. Jim was a pretty special character to me that I actually had pretty big plans for. But I'll get into that a little further down the line.

ISSUE 4
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

WALKING DEAD #4

1. NIGHT SHOT OF CAMP SPLASH.
2. RICK CLIMBS ON TOP OF CAMPER, TALK TO SHANE "HEATED ARGUMENT" SMELL, WE GOTTA MOVE CAMP, WELL WE NEED MORE GUNS.
3. THE NEXT MORNING. TALK TO GLENN, ABOUT GETTING GUNS FROM CITY,
4. ↓
5. LORI TRIES TO TALK RICK OUT OF IT. CARL: "DON'T LEAVE DADDY." ALL SAY GOODBYE.
6. GLENN AND RICK TALKING. "HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO THIS?" TALK ABOUT JIM? THE SMELL IN THE CITY... "I'VE ALMOST GOTTEN USED TO IT" BUT NOT CLOSE UP
7. RICK + GLENN COME UP ON ZOMBIE FROM LAST ISSUE. "WHAT ARE WE DOING?
8. RICK EXPLAINS SMELL THEORY AS HE CUTS UP BODY. "RUB THIS ON YOUR CLOTHES + THEN PUT IT IN YOUR POCKETS!"
9. OFF TO CITY. "DON'T TELL MY WIFE ABOUT THIS." "DON'T GET IT CLOSE TO MOUTH!" "MY NOSE ICHES"
10. TEST THEORY ON LONE ZOMBIE IN OUT SKIRTS. MOVE ON TO CITY.
11. MOVE TOWARDS HEART OF CITY. (GET SHOPPING CART.
12. NICE DOWN SHOT NEAR GUN STORE (SIME + ISOTOPE SPLASH.) "THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!"
13. CAUTIOUSLY BREAK INTO GUN STORE. (HATCHET IN GLASS) ~~(SOMETHING) GET SHOT~~ GLENN: "IT'S WORSE THAN WE THOUGHT."
14. "GRAB IT ALL!" NICE SHOT OF PRISTINE GUN STORE.
15. ESCAPE. ZOMBIE GETS TO CLOSE. HACKS INTO IT.
16. STARTS TO RAIN, WASHES THE SMELL OFF. "RUN!"
17. CART TIPS OVER GUNS EVERYWHERE. RACK: "PICK THEM UP!" RICK STARTS FIGHTING OF ZOMBIES.
18. RICK BIT "JUST SHIRT" GET CART UP RUN OFF W/ IT.
19. RUNNING W/ CART GET TO CLEARING.
20. CHECK CLOTHES RICKS FINE BOTH IN UNDERWEAR. "WE DID IT!" (STARTS TO GET DARK.)
21. "IT'S GETTING DARK. I'M SURE HE'LL BE FINE (HOLDS HAND) DON'T... I'M WITH RICK, YOU KNOW THAT.
22. WHAT ABOUT THAT NIGHT? "THAT NIGHT WAS A MISTAKE.

END.

ISH (5) ATTACK AT CAMP. ANDREA DIES JIM BITTEN. "LEAVE ME IN TOWN."

MIKA TAN

SHALLOW LEEBOUND

Before we dive in, I just wanted to start with a spoiler warning. If you're reading this series for the first time, as I know many of you out there are, which is just the coolest thing—these entries will spoil things. For instance, there is a brief plot for issue №5 at the bottom of the plot for issue №4 here. From time to time, I would have ideas for future issues and I would jot them down in the margins of these plots. So keep that in mind as you enjoy these entries.

This issue is another one that went more or less by the numbers. I don't think the plot and the issue really differ at all. Every beat fell nicely on the corresponding page. I'd say maybe I was getting better at this whole thing, but... stay tuned. Things will vary wildly at times.

Does that say Mika Tan at the bottom there? I was going to erase that but there's not a ton to talk about this issue. Everyone's favorite comic book cover artist Dave Johnson had a friend who was dating Mika Tan and he got invited to Thanksgiving dinner with Mika and a bunch of other porn stars. He called me while I was plotting this issue and told me the story. So I jotted the name down because I'd never heard of Mika Tan. What an odd little time capsule.

Shallow Leebound on the other hand? Your guess is as good as mine. I think it was an odd and unique name I came up with that never made it into the book. Maybe he was the Daryl Dixon that could have appeared in issue №5 but never did. Sadly the world will never meet Shallow Leebound and we'll never get action figures of him and he'll never be played by Scoot McNairy on the TV show. Such a shame. Oh well, never say never.

PAGE NOTES:

2: "Heated argument" makes me laugh now.

8: Ah, the smell theory. I guess this was the first (only?) thing I added to Romero-style zombie mythology. The idea that you could cover yourself in guts and zombies wouldn't come after you. This pre-dates *Shaun of the Dead* and their brilliant pretending to be zombies scene (lordy that movie is a classic). Does this theory make any sense? Not at all. Zombies' nervous systems work somewhat, that's how their brain is still sending signals to their body, but their respiratory systems are very much not working. They walk around underwater just fine. They don't need to breathe. So how do they smell without breathing in? What?! You know what... still cool. I stand by it. And the scene here adapted into season 1 of the TV show was awesome.

12: James Sime & Isotope cameo. James Sime was an EARLY supporter of my work. The owner of the Isotope Comic Book Lounge in San Francisco, California... he once even tricked me into being a part of a live freak show. True story. I was... NOT comfortable stapling a dollar bill to a guy's cheek. Man... what a WEIRD entry to Cutting Room Floor this is becoming. ANYWAY, I wanted to pay tribute to his greatness by putting him in the book and that was so important to me I actually mentioned it in the plot. Fun!

13: "Cautiously breaks into gun store." I don't get writers' block. When I wrote this plot, I knew they had to get into the gun store. I didn't bother to work out HOW. Then when I was writing the script... "hatchet in glass" just wasn't going to cut it. So I considered it for a while, and decided the door was made of... wood... and Rick would just... hatchet his way in? I doubt there are a lot of gun stores or really any store that has a wooden back door. I remember the solid metal door that was behind the comic shop I worked in... that thing was SOLID. But the story had to move and I didn't want to spend a lot of time on that part... so wooden door it was. Am I a hack? Is that what we're discovering here? Hey... I was YOUNG! ISH!

20: Both in underwear? Heh. I think I thought this would look silly and the rain washed them off anyway. But originally they got so gross from the gore that they were going to strip all their gross clothes off when they were in the clear. Glenn and Rick walking back to camp in tighty whities? Opportunity missed.

22: "What about that night?" "That night was a mistake." Hey, 23-year-old Robert Kirkman, you big dummy, that's way better dialogue than you actually wrote in the comic. Sheesh.

Anything else I can make fun of myself for? Hmmm. No. Okay. See you all back here next issue!

ISSUE 5

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD #5

(1) CROW (OR WHATEVER) IN F/G EATING CORPSE GUN SHOT SCARES IT AWAY.
(2) TARGET PRACTICE. SHANE + RICK SHOW THEM HOW TO SHOOT.
(3) CONGRADULATIONS + TALKING.... SHOW WHO'S GOOD WHO'S NOT.
(4) MORE SHOOTING.
(5) LEAVE "SHOOTING RANGE" "WHY WE GOTTA DO THIS SO FAR FROM CAMP?" "GETTING COLD OUT HERE, SHANE." "I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT, RICK. WE'RE NOT MOVING CAMP."
(6) RICK BONDING W/ CARL. "I DON'T WANNA SHOOT NO DEAD PEOPLE."
(7) BACK AT CAMP DONNA GOSSIPING ABOUT AMY/ANDREA ← DALE "ONLY WITCHES [illegible] WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN AFTER DARK."
(8) DALE + RICK CHOPPING WOOD.
(9) WOOD CHOPPING + TALKING ABOUT STUFF. TALK ABOUT GIRLS "JUST LOST WIFE." "IT'S JUST NICE HAVING THEM AROUND." "GO BACK + START THE FIRE FOR THE COOKOUT."
(10) COOK OUT. DEER ON SPIT. ALL SITTING AROUND FIRE (KEEPING WARM)
(11) DISCUSSION --- SOMETHING. FILLER.... CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT. "DID YOU HEAR THAT?"
(12) ZOMBIES ATTACK...
(13) FIGHTING.
(14) KILLING.
(15) FIGHTING.
(16) CARL SHOOTS ZOMBIE
(17) MORE FIGHTING
(18) ANDREA KILLED.
(19) JIM GOES BERSERK...
(20) GRAPHIC VIOLENCE
(21) ZOMBIES BEATEN LORI APOLOGIZES TO RICK THEN NOTICES JIM.
(22) "JIM YOU'RE BITTEN!" "THAT'S NOTHING." (BIG BLOODY HOLE IN ARM.

END.

That weird shape at the top of the page was from a conversation I was having with Tony Moore and Cory Walker (we shared a studio space in my house at the time) about how Wolverine had three claws, but you rarely if ever saw them resulting in three cuts. So that was me trying to picture Wolverine cutting three grooves into a person's head. Years later I would actually write Wolverine's claws doing similar damage in an *X-Force* annual drawn by Jason Pearson, which I believe was, and will forever be, my final comic book published by Marvel. Unless they ever decide to publish the lost *Killraven* miniseries I did with Rob Liefeld.

Okay, so this is the loosest plot for an issue yet. Most of it is just "fighting, etc". I knew pretty much what I was doing and it's much easier to break down the beats of the actual panels in script form, so I kind of didn't need to do much plotting on paper. That said, if you compare this plot to the final issue, things got moved around a lot.

JIM. I mentioned before that I had big plans for him. There's going to be plenty to talk about next issue, so I figure I'll cover this here. I always looked at WALKING DEAD as a real-world character study that had an element that made it more commercial: zombies. When TWD started, I'd planned to do a trilogy of similar books. All dramas, with normal people, no powers, no superheroes, but with some other element that made them interesting. One of them was going to be set around a mechanic shop... and feature JIM as a main character. You'd even get to meet his large family that "saved" him during his escape from Atlanta in this book. The idea was that the whole time you were reading this real-world book about mechanics and the people they knew, if you noticed Jim was the same guy from TWD, you'd think "Holy crap, are zombies going to attack at some point?" But... they wouldn't. They never would.

As I type this... I can't recall what the third series was. But Jim was going to at least cameo in that. So... there was going to be a JIM trilogy of books that weren't connected... but kind of were... THE WALKING DEAD... and two others. So look at that... a whole line of books left on the cutting room floor.

PAGE NOTES:

5: I moved this argument about moving camp to later in the issue when they're chopping firewood. Exciting.

6: For some reason, I didn't do this scene at all. Maybe I thought Carl protesting about shooting dead people would telegraph that by the end of this issue he would be doing that very thing.

7: Thankfully I thought better of giving Donna this line of dialogue.

8: Originally Shane was not in this scene.

10-11: BIG deviation from the plot here. "Discussion -- something - filler" becomes four pages instead of one. For the better? Maybe. I mean... I guess you could say this scene of these characters droning on about their past is the basis for readers caring about them as they start to die very soon. I must admit... a lot of it was just to lead up to the gag of Jim simply saying "MECHANIC." As I stated above, I really loved that character.

18: What's that word crossed out there? "Yadda." I was literally writing "yadda yadda yadda" for that page when I decided... y'know, someone needs to die here. Who... how about ANDREA! Also, it's clear from the plot that I hadn't gotten the idea that Andrea was a potential sharpshooter yet either. So at some point in the writing of the script, I added that in and decided to kill Amy instead. But holy crap, thinking of what Andrea became in the book... well... it's kind of nuts that she almost died in issue №5.

20: Graphic violence. The original plan was to focus on the damage Jim was doing in this scene. Thankfully at some point in the writing, I decided to instead focus on the emotion of Jim dealing with his past issues.

ISSUE 6
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD #6

LORI SCRATCHES FACE "YOU SON OF A B[illegible]!"

1. ZOOM OUT AT FUNERAL FROM JIMS ARM
2. RICK TALKS AT FUNERAL
3. ALL LEAVE DALE SAYS SOMETHING
4. DONNA TAKING CARE OF JIM
5. LEAVES TENT. TALKS TO LORI.
6. CARL, RICK + SHANE HUNTING.
7. SHANE: "THIS ISN'T MY FAULT, IS IT?"
8. DALE AND ANDREA IN CAMPER.
9. DONNA + RICK + SHANE TALK. "JIM, KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS TO DO.
10. JIM LEFT AT EDGE OF CITY
11. TALK TO JIM... SAY GOODBYE'S... LOT'S O' CRYING.
12. ~~[illegible]~~ DAY. WIDE SHOT OF CAMPIN MORNING. RICK PUTTING ON TWO PANTS "CARL: CAN I COME?"
13. TALKS TO SHANE OUTSIDE TENT
14. SHANE DEVASTATED... STILL... GOES OFF TO HUNT. RICK FOLLOWS... "SHANE, WAIT!"
15. LORI HURT. CAROL CONSOLES CARL RUNS OF INTO THE WOODS...?
16. SHANE PUNCHES RICK.
17. "YOU BASTARD!" LORI SCRATCHES SHANE. SHANE DEVASTATED PAUSES
18. RICK + SHANE HUNTING. ARGUING.
19. SHANE TALKING TO RICK... RICK MISSING FOR ANIMAL,
20. SHANE WITH GUN ON RICK. GETS SHOT... CARL CRYING.
21. CARL RUNS TO RICK SHANE GARGLES + FALLS OVER. "IT'S NOT LIKE KILLING THE DEAD OR S[illegible]"
22. IT NEVER SHOULD BE SON... IT NEVER SHOULD BE.

Every zombie movie I've ever seen has the "I've been bit, don't let me turn into one of those things" scene. The person then either shoots themself or lets someone else do it. Those scenes always bugged me. I just don't think, on the whole, that most people would choose death over... whatever being a zombie is. Maybe it's fine being a zombie from a zombie's perspective? Who knows. Hence Jim wanting to be left by the tree.

Okay, this was a BIG issue. This was the end of the first story arc, the conclusion to what would make up the first collected volume of TWD, and leading up to this issue... it very well could have been the finale of the series. I wasn't sure this book would last past issue №6, which is why the Lori/Shane/Rick love triangle that was really the dramatic basis of this whole series wrapped up so quickly.

That said, I was PRETTY SURE by the time I was plotting this issue that the series would continue at least to issue №12. Sales were slowly ticking up, instead of slowly (or rapidly) drifting down, as is most often the case. So while it didn't make it into the plot, I did very seriously consider an alternate ending for this issue.

Rather than Carl killing Shane, I considered having Carl find them in the woods just as Shane was killing RICK. That's right... I considered killing Rick Grimes as early as issue №6.

How would that have gone? The focus of the book would have shifted to Carl to a certain extent as he was too scared to tell Lori what he saw, for fear Shane would kill Lori, too. And Shane wouldn't have known Carl had seen him. So there would have been a lot of tense exchanges between the two of them. Shane would have been the first real big villain in the book, and he would have been with the group, on the same side as them, the enemy sleeping the next tent over.

It could have been cool. I doubt it would have been as successful as keeping the focus on Rick, but it's a fun "what if" scenario. And yes, I've mentioned this in interviews in the past, so people are aware I considered this, and I get asked often to do a series of issues that follows this scenario to see how it would have gone. That would be fun, but I have no intention of ever doing this. Who has the time?

PAGE NOTES:

5: No clue why I changed this scene from Donna talking to Lori to her talking to Allen.

7: Clearly I changed "This isn't my fault, is it?" to a much more heated argument between Shane and Rick.

11: This scene got changed to the silent time lapse scene, which I think is much more effective. I'm also proud of myself for never having a zombie Jim show up and keeping what happened to him after this scene ambiguous.

14/15 & 16/17: During the plotting of pages 14 and 15, I realized there needed to be more here, so I added two pages and then moved them up. So that's why they're written in flipped order here.

19: In the plotting stage, I assumed Rick and Shane would have a less heated argument while hunting, and the betrayal would happen without Rick realizing it, while he was aiming for another animal. When it came time to actually type up the script, I opted for a much more heated argument with a much more manic Shane.

20: These days... I would have expanded this scene and figured out a way to have Shane getting shot in the neck be a page turn, happening maybe on page 22 instead of the middle of page 20. That would require me expanding the issue to 24 or 26 pages. Unfortunately, expanding issues like that was far more difficult back then. Especially because this issue was already running late and adding pages would have made that situation worse. Looking back, the scene works fine as is, but I see ways I could have given it more punch by drawing it out a little bit more.

ISSUE 7
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD #7

(1) [illegible] LORI + SHANE AT EDGE OF ATLANTA.
(2) [illegible]
(3) 4 [illegible] OF SHANE + LORI ZOOM IN ON WEDDING RING.
(4) SPLASH. FUNERAL FOR SHANE [illegible], HIS HAT IS ON CROOK.
(5) FOUR WIDE PANELS CLOSE ON LORI AS [illegible] ONE ELSE WALKS [illegible].
(6) LORI SPITS ON GRAVE. "YOU SON OF A BITCH." RICK + ALLEN TALK AS THEY WALK AWAY. "LORI TOLD MOST, SHE TRUSTED SHANE... HELL... WE ALL DID."
(7) RICK TALKS WITH DALE AT CAMP. "I'M NOT ONE TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO..
(8) RICK + CARL (WHO'S STILL FULKEDUP.) SEE ALLEN SIPHONING GAS IN B/G.
(9) GLENN + REST - RICK ASKS "YOU ALL PACKED UP? "LET'S HIT THE ROAD."
(10) ON THE MOVE IN CAMPER. DALE DRIVING.
(11) PUSHING CAR OFF THE ROAD
(12) NEW CHARACTERS INTRODUCED.
(13) INVITE IN CAMP.
[illegible] KEEPING WATCH WHILE OTHERS [illegible].
(15) ROAMERS. EXPLAIN [illegible] ARE DOCILE... SOME NOT.
(16) RICK GOES AND HACKS THEM UP.
(17) MORE HACKIN...
(18) BACK ON ROAD.
(19) NIGHT TIME CHOPPIN WOOD W/ BLACK GUY.
(20) ALL AROUND FIRE.
(21) RICK GOES TO LORI. "ITS WARMER AROUND THE [illegible]."
(22) LORI "I'M PREGNANT." TWO PANELS

END.

"YOU'D THINK SHE GOT A STASH OF GOLDEN EGGS AS MUCH AS SHE'S CLIMBING MY BEAN POLE."

The coolest character in all the Romero Movies is "the black guy". Duane Jones in *Night of the Living Dead,* Ken Foree in *Dawn of the Dead,* and Terry Alexander in *Day of the Dead*. They were always the character who was the most together and capable and really stood out as the one most likely to make it out of this alive... even if that wasn't always the case.

I wanted to pay tribute to those great characters with Tyreese. He's instantly established as level-headed and extremely capable. And honestly, he's always been one of my favorite characters. Also, at this point, I didn't know if I'd ever get Morgan back in the book. I don't even think I'd given that any thought at this point.

This was written with Charlie Adlard in mind. I wasn't very far ahead of Tony, I think I only had the opening 5 pages written when it was clear I had to continue the book without him. So it was cool to hit the ground running with Charlie and immediately start introducing new, essential characters to the series.

This was also the first issue I wrote while having a sense that the book might be around for a while. So this issue is a real turning point for the series in a number of ways.

I'm not a huge fan of flashbacks, for whatever reason, I tried to avoid doing them most of the time on the series. But to give the cliffhanger of this issue as much punch as possible, and to lead into Shane's funeral, I thought it best that we actually SEE Lori and Shane together in the past. And it was a cool way to intro Charlie, having him show something from the past we hadn't seen before.

PROTO NEGAN LINE: You see that line of dialogue at the bottom of the page? Who was that meant for? I vaguely remember it being meant for Tyreese talking about Carol in a future issue once they're together. I must have decided Tyreese doesn't have the personality for this kind of line. Never forget... I'm the scumbag who wrote BATTLE POPE. It's certainly not present in my every day personality, but my brain, for some reason, loves to come up with semi-offensive scumbag lines, and they have to go somewhere, right? I certainly never say them out loud. Was Negan just lines of dialogue fighting for a voice? Was he always in me and it took until issue №100 for him to manifest into the series? Was me jotting this line of dialogue down the REAL birth of Negan? Is this Negan's REAL FIRST APPEARANCE?!

Yes. I say it is. For all you collectors out there... this is it! THE WALKING DEAD DELUXE №7 is the REAL first appearance, in print, of NEGAN! It's official. I said it. That makes it official.

Oh, and then next to that is me using my dumb hand to practice my dumb signature... for some reason. Trying to make it faster? Because I was signing so many WALKING DEAD books? Maybe that was it.

PAGE NOTES:

1-7: Damn, it's crazy how close this plot is to the final issue. I almost could have given this plot to Charlie and just written the dialogue after the pages were drawn. That's how Stan Lee did it, kids! Modern comic writers are working too hard! That's right, artists... I said the writers are working TOO hard! Let the debate commence again!

8: Rick didn't end up being too fucked up from his fight with Shane, and I guess I figured we could lose seeing Allen siphoning gas out of cars. Is that all that's left on the cutting room floor this issue? Allen siphoning gas? Good thing we had that proto Negan line or this installment would be pretty boring.

12: "New characters introed" (Yeah, I make up words all the time!) Again, this is just shorthand for me. I knew it would be a father, daughter, and boyfriend, I even knew more or less how the story between Julie and Chris would go. I hadn't named any of them yet, though.

14: Thankfully, gas siphoning didn't end up being the main focus of this issue, as it seems was the intention from the plot.

19: I'm more or less marking what will visually be happening on the page. I have vague notions about Glenn being sweet on Carol and Carol being sweet on Tyreese. That kind of character stuff gets worked into the story while I'm at the keyboard writing the script. I get to this page in the plot and I'm like, "Chopping wood? Do we need to see that? Okay... what are they talking about? What can I get across in this scene while I'm setting up the campfire for the next scene?" That's kind of how it comes together.

ISSUE 8
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD #8

(1) TALK w/ LORI. PREGNANT?
(2) TELL GLENN.
(3) TALK w/ LORI "I KNOW. DO YOU THINK I AM THINKING IT?" "I'M [illegible] GIRL!" LET'S GO [illegible] SLEEP.
(4) DRIVING, SEE HOUSE THAT WAS ON FIRE "WOULDA BEEN [illegible]."
(5) WIDE: THEY'VE STOPPED. GLENN SYPHONS GAS CALLED TO SEE FROZEN ZOMBIE
(6) INSPECT FROZEN ZOMBIE -- KILL IT.
(7) LORI + CAROL TALK IN CAMPER, RICK FROM FRONT "WHAT'S THAT?" PULL OVER
(8) STOPPED IN FRONT OF NEIGHBORHOOD. PARK RV, WILSHIRE ESTATES.
(9) GET OUT. LOOKING AROUND CAROL + SOPHIA WA[illegible] BY ZOMBIES.
(10) DECIDE TO GO IN HOUSE. "GONNA BE DARK SOON.
(11) DONNA + ALLEN TALK ABOUT ANDREA "LOOK AT HER." "YOU'D THINK SHE'D BEEN BITTEN
(12) ZOMBIES ATTACK.
(13) FIGHT... KILL.
(14) MORE ZOMBIES... FIGHT KILL
(15) KILL FIGHT.
(16) DRAGGING BODIES OUTSIDE. TALK w/TYREESE OR SOMETHING.
(17) EVERYONE GETS SEPARATE ROOMS. GLENN TAKES BATHROOM. "I'VE SLEPT [illegible] TWO.
(18) RICK + LORI IN ROOM DONNA COMES BY w/ BLANKETS
(19) SEES TYREESE IN HALL WELCOMES HIM. OPENS DALE'S DOOR.
(20) DONNA SEES DALE + ANDREA MAKING OUT. LEAVES ROOM, SMILES.
(21) BACK IN ROOM w/ ALLEN. "ANDREA'S GOING TO BE FINE."
(22) LEAVES BLOW OFF SIGN. "ALL DEAD. DO NOT ENTER!"

END.

Looking back, this is kind of the first issue of THE WALKING DEAD that is very much a WALKING DEAD story. What I mean is this is when you kind of see what it is this book is going to be. We know the group pretty well, they have their little bits of drama happening between them. They're on the road, so that provides a bit of conflict and interest. They're looking for food, shelter, etc, really driving home the survival aspects, and this issue ends with one of the best cliffhangers, at least up to this point.

So issue №8, when we really kind of hit our stride.

Looking over this plot, well... this might be the closest we've come with plot and final issue comparison. Each and every moment falls on the page it was meant to fall on in the plot. Things just didn't deviate at all in the scripting stage. Which doesn't happen often, thankfully... as it will make these entries somewhat dull. So... sorry for that.

Wilshire Estates is introduced here... and the famous "ALL DEAD DO NOT ENTER" sign that was adapted into the show in the pilot episode makes its debut at the end of this issue.

I'll try not to do this too often, but this is a great chance for a plug. If you haven't read THE RISE OF THE GOVERNOR novel that I wrote with Jay Bonansinga, you might want to give that a look. It ties into this very issue in an interesting way as it features Wilshire Estates and even reveals who wrote the sign at the gate. Fun stuff!

PAGE NOTES:

1: I don't think the question mark in "pregnant?" means that I hadn't decided yet if she was pregnant. It just means Rick was going to be asking her questions about it.

2: I thought it would be interesting for Lori to just immediately tell the group about the pregnancy after telling Rick. I was trying to show her state of mind and how she was a little lost in all this. Rereading it again for this reprint it struck me as cold, maybe a little more than I intended it to. It's always bugged me how readers, on average, never really liked Lori. I always saw her as more sympathetic than readers did. I never really understood why my opinions of her never quite got through in the work. Reading scenes like this I finally start to understand. I feel like I was a young writer and didn't really handle Lori the way I thought I did. Kind of a shame.

3: The shorthand here, where I'm just listing pieces of a larger conversation... are hilarious when read together. "We had sex once! Let's get some sleep." Hoo boy!

5: "Wide"... I was making a note that this page opened with a wide panel... this was early enough in my career that I hadn't quite realized that I open almost every single page in every single comic... with a wide panel.

9: Hey! Here's something I changed. I saved the zombies being in Wilshire for page 12 when they open the basement. Originally though, I'd intended to have Carol and Sophia walk by another frozen zombie outside without realizing it. Just to show that winter was safer, kind of, I think.

11: What was plotted was meant to be a whole scene of Donna and Allen talking, but as I wrote the script I ended up boiling it all down to one panel so we could spend more time exploring the area with other characters. I feel like it still got the point across.

12-15: The zombie action doesn't require much plotting by this point. Although I did cut the fighting down by a page so we could spend page 15 searching the basement.

22: Originally it was going to be leaves blowing off the sign? Huh. Weird. I knew it'd be snowing and cold in this issue... snow melting off makes so much more sense. I don't know why I ever thought leaves would work. Oh well!

ISSUE 9

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD #7

1. RICK WAKES UP, SEES LORI ALREADY UP, LOOKING AT CARL
2. RICK + LORI TALKING. APOL [illegible] CARL + NEW BABY
3. CAROL + TYREESE WAKE UP SNUGGLING. "[illegible] DAD." NO IT'S OKAY.
4. ALLEN + DONNA [illegible] UP. [illegible] SEX.
5. ALL [illegible] TALK ABOUT SEARCHING OTHER HOUSES. JULIE: DADDY, I DON'T WANNA GO.
6. ANDREA CAN YOU WATCH THE KIDS? SURE ↑ START SEARCHING.
7. DONNA + ALLEN ARE LOOKING [illegible] RICK GOES TO CAMPER SEES [illegible] "OH [illegible]
8. DONNA KILLED [illegible] BITTEN, [illegible] RANGH OUT, RICK RUNNING TO HELP
9. ALLEN GOES CRAZY. "THINK OF YOUR KIDS."
10. ZOMBIES EVERYWHERE. RUN TO RV. TYREES + RICK GO BACK TO GET JULIE + CHRIS.
11. RICK: WE CAN'T GO BACK THAT WAY! GO OUT ON ROOF. "WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?"
12. DALE DRIVES CAMPER TO PORCH ROOF. DRIVES OVER ZOMBIES
13. THEY RIDE OF WITH FOUR ON ROOF.
14. LATER THAT NIGHT. ALLEN THANKS RICK. "I WASN'T THINKING ABOUT MY SONS."
15. THE NEXT DAY. IN CAMPER. "WHERE'S MOMMY? "SHE'S DEAD!" BREAKS DOWN
16. TIME PASSES WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF FOOD.
17. RAIDING SMALL GROCERY / CONVIENIENT STORE.
18. GO HUNTING TYREESE, RICK, CARL. SHOW LEAVING CAMP.
19. TRACKING HUNTING.
20. CARL SHOT. WHAT DID YOU DO? TELL TO CARL.
21. [illegible]
22. I'LL KILL YOU! I'LL FUCKING KILL YOU!

[illegible] GOES PUNKING [illegible]

Well, this issue is just jam-packed! Tons of dialogue (whew) but there are two MASSIVE events packed into one issue, which is really quite cool. The escape from Wilshire estates--

SIDE NOTE: I called it Wilshire estates in the comic because I'd recently traveled to Los Angeles and might have even plotted these issues in Los Angeles and I'd done some driving on Wilshire Boulevard and decided to use the name. Charlie when drawing the issue, wrote Wiltshire on the sign when they arrive, I assume because of Wiltshire, England. When they arrive, the sign says Wiltshire, but as they exit in this issue, it says Wilshire (although it's now mostly covered by a sound effect) so really, both versions exist in the comic but as it's only ever shown on the sign, I think most people think it's Wiltshire Estates, as that's seen most prominently, but it's always been Wilshire to me... which is why I still type that.

So we have the escape from Wilshire estates and Carl getting shot--all in one issue! Wow!

Aside from that, there's a lot of fun character work in this issue. A nice moment between Lori and Rick. The beginnings of Tyreese's relationship with Carol and a big moment for Donna, that an older Robert Kirkman might have worried was telegraphing her death a little TOO much... but maybe not. Did you see it coming? Am I just overly worried? These days I might have handled that a little differently... maybe... who knows, really?

THE COVER: The original cover for this comic is considered by most to be Tony Moore's best. Fun fact: it's the last cover he drew before exiting the series. It was originally an idea sketched out for the volume 1 TPB that we didn't use. But Tony and I liked it so much that we agreed to use it for an upcoming cover. It fell on this issue, but it features Rick chopping wood while a zombie creeps up behind him... which doesn't remotely happen in this issue. So this cover, aside from being spectacular, marks the first OF MANY covers that are completely misleading and is a huge milestone for THE WALKING DEAD history. From this point on in the series, there are many covers that are meant to mislead the reader, to look cool and sell the book, but not give away what happens inside. That all started here!

PAGE NOTES:

1-3: Pretty much by the numbers, no changes here.

4: Whoa, were Allen and Donna originally supposed to have sex here? No. That's just another example of my weird shorthand when I'm plotting that only makes sense to me. That was written to remind me of that dialogue at the end where Allen, in dumb husband mode, tries to steer the moment into sex at the worst possible time.

6: Note how I originally was going to have a full page devoted to Rick asking Andrea to watch the kids... then I decided to cram that into page 5 in dialogue and have them start searching on this page.

I probably noticed as I was plotting that this is a page turn and would be a good moment to move ahead with the search. BOY... exciting notes on this issue...

7: Big changes here. Donna stuff was handled on page 6 instead. Things just getting moved around in the script stage. No big deal.

10-12: So this scene was expanded to give the action more room and to add in the Chris and Julie moment that advances their story and sets up where it eventually leads (No spoilers here! This time!)

14: This scene gets more or less cut entirely. I just handled it in shorter scenes on other pages.

15: This was moved to happen immediately after the escape--which makes it fall on page 15 as originally intended--and we've made up lost time in the plot and gotten things back on track! These days I might have just made the issue longer than usual, but I didn't have that luxury back when these early issues were coming out, had to fit it all in 22 pages!

16: When I plot pages like this... I really am just kind of saying "Screw you, future Robert, who will be typing out this script. YOU figure it out!" Sometimes it works out well because I don't waste time in the plot stage working out little scenes and dialogue when I can do that easily as I type out the script... but other times... I get to these kinds of pages and say "Fuck you, past Robert! What did you want here?! Why didn't you write out more?! AAAAAGH."

19: Similarly, I have no idea what they're going to be talking about, if at all, in scenes like this during the plot stage. But as I'm writing out the script, little moments present themselves and I have room to just decide on the fly, "Oh, we need more attention on Allen losing Donna, I'll have them talk about that here."

20: Nowadays... I'd have given this a full-page splash. But I guess I just felt like I needed to have more on this page. You'll notice every OTHER time Carl gets shot in this series (vague spoilers) it gets a full-page splash.

ISSUE 10

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD #10

1. STOP! HE'S ALIVE!
2. RICK W/ CARL FREAKING OUT SHOT HIS FOOT. [illegible] HE'S [illegible] AT [illegible]
3. RICK WALKS OFF SENDS ~~RICK~~ TYREESE BACK TO CAMP. [illegible]
4. TYREESE & CAMP. TELLS DESTINY ABOUT CARL. THE LEAVE
5. RICK ARRIVES DOG CHARGES TRACKS RICK.
6. DEBBIE ARRIVES [illegible]
7. I'VE DONE ALL I CAN... NOW WE JUST WAIT.. GLENN SEES [illegible] & CAROL EMBRACE.
8. WIDE SHOT [illegible] W/ CAROL [illegible]
9. WITH [illegible] GLENN W/ DAUGHTER
10. RICK + LORI TALK ABOUT CARL [illegible] THING
11. ~~OTIS IS GONE~~ SAMS NO. SAMS 14 YEAR OLD. TALK ABOUT WILSHIRE ESTATES.
12. ~~CARL'S AWAKE!~~ ALLEN W/ ANDREA "I JUST LOST MY WIFE GODDAMMIT!
13. FIGHT.
14. CARL'S AWAKE!
15. RICK + LORI W/ CARL.
16. CARL W/ SOPHIA SCENE ARE [illegible] "YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS" KISS ON CHEEK TWO ONE TALK [illegible]
17. DINNER. [illegible]
18. MORE DINNER ~~EATING~~ BEING PLATE TO CARL.
19. TYREESE, CHRIS + JULIE, DOING SOMETHING
20. GLENN + OLDES [illegible]
21. RICK TALKING TO FARMER SLEEP IN THE BARN.'
22. "THE BARN?" YOU CAN'T SLEEP THERE [illegible] SICK ONES.

END

Maybe not the most exciting issue, but important nonetheless. Hershel's farm! Introduction of Maggie!

I have to say, it's really weird reading these issues again after having actually BEEN on Hershel's farm in real life. Seasons 2 and 3 of the show are when I spent the most time on set (by far), so I've been all over Hershel's farm, and it's funny reading the issue while actually having kind of been in a real location that is somewhat similar.

It's also weird that sometimes I hear the actor's voice in my head when I read and sometimes I don't... but for Hershel, I really hear Scott Wilson talking while I read him, and it just makes me miss that guy even more. He really was the best.

Maggie was clearly not meant to be such a big character when she was introduced here. She was just one of Hershel's daughters. She gets no big intro moment, and she's just kind of there until her talk with Glenn. I think that's cool. I think it's neat that characters sort of grew into something special organically as the series progressed. A lot of things were planned out along the way, and a lot of characters had arcs in place when they were introduced, but some of them, like Maggie, sort of naturally grew into bigger roles. It's a neat process to be looking back on all these years later.

THE COVER: Cliff Rathburn drew the original cover for issue №10 for solicitation because I was pretty sure Tony wouldn't want to continue on covers after he was removed from the book. I ended up being wrong about that, and Tony came back and drew covers up through issue №24 (thanks, Tony!). Charlie didn't want to draw covers at the time and preferred to focus on the interior pages. Cliff was handling the gray tones on the series and is a fantastic artist in his own right (look for his upcoming book coming from Image, it's RAD), and was happy to draw a cover for this book. We eventually used it on a script book collecting the scripts for issues №1-6 in comic book form. Both Cliff and Tony worked from a layout I drew for the cover, and if you're interested in seeing that, ask your local comic shop to order you a copy of THE WALKING DEAD: THE COVERS hardcover. It features all kinds of behind the scenes looks at the covers for issues №1-50. Someday we'll finally put out volume 2!

PAGE NOTES:

2: So you can see here how the dialogue bits from this page are just kind of crammed together in a way that doesn't really make sense to anyone but me. "Shot his foot" appears to be part of the sentence before it and not something Otis will be saying in the issue. These days I'm not quite as reckless with my plots, as I've had many moments over the years where I sit down to type up a script and I look at the plot and think, "What the hell did I mean here?"

4: That's just poor handwriting. I didn't write "aboot". I'm not Canadian.

7: Man, I really devoted a LOT of time showing Glenn upset about Tyreese and Carol. Too much?

9: In the plot stage Hershel's wife was alive. How awful am I? I'm even killing characters BEFORE I get to the scripting stage sometimes.

10: "I love you thing." It's clearly referring to this somewhat awkward and clunky scene I wrote where Lori and Rick say they love each other six times in two panels. I was young! I've gotten busted on this a few times, but back then (and maybe still to this day) I really like it where characters are so in love with someone, they express it in a really clunky way. The idea is they're just trying to show their genuine feelings and it's okay if it comes out clunky. But in hindsight, I guess it just reads like cruddy dialogue. So, boo.

11: "Says 14 year old" Your guess is as good as mine.

13: Okay... more of an "argument". Cool glimpse of who Andrea would eventually become in this scene.

19-20: These two scenes were flipped and I don't remember why, but I HOPE it's because I realized how funny it would be to see Maggie dragging Glenn away to have sex while Tyreese scolded Chris and Julie. That bit cracked me up. And LOOK, Glenn was originally supposed to have sex with "oldest daughter". Poor Lacey could have been a much bigger character. That would have helped when we were working on Season 3 and realized half of the people in the show had names that started with "M": Michonne, Maggie, Milton, Merle, Morgan, Mike, Maddie... okay... not half... but close.

21-22: Hershel referred to as "farmer" here. And look at that, the line was originally going to mention "sick ones" instead of "dead ones". It really has no punch whatsoever as "sick ones". I mean... oh, there's more people in the barn and they're sick? Okay. So glad I changed that.

ISSUE 11

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD II

WHAT DO YOU KNOW? THE ZOMBIES HERE DIDN'T COME WITH AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL!"

(1) ARGUE W/ FARMER ABOUT ZOMBIES. "YOU'RE KEEPING THEM IN THE BARN!"
(2) OTHERS WALK UP. FIGHT CONTINUES, "ALLE GLENN + GRL. CLOTHES MESSED UP"
(3) MY SON! "HE'S NOT YOUR SON! LINE FROM ABOVE.
(4) HOW MANY DO YOU HAVE? (RICK STARTS TO CAVE.)
(5) DECIDES TO LEAVE AND ALLOW ZOMBIES.
(6) RICK + ALLEN TALKING AT CAMPER. IT'S NIGHT TIME. LORI'S SLEEPING INSIDE WITH CARL.
(7) TALK CONTINUES. ~~ALLEN~~ GLENN LEAVES CAMPER, SEEN W/ GIRL IN B/G.
(8) NEXT MORNING FARMER WORKING W/ PIGS OR SOMETHING. RICK WALKS UP.
(9) GIRLS FROM GUNS.
(10) ANDREA APOLOGIZES TO ALLEN.
(11) RICK + TYREESE ABOUT THE KIDS CARRYING GUNS
(12) TARGET PRACTICE
(13) FARMER COMES + YELLS AT THEM FOR SHOOTING AT CATTLE, SEES ZOMBIE.
(14) GOOD SHOT OF ZOMBIE. THEY TRY TO SHOOT. FARMER STOPS THEM.
(15) CATCHES ZOMBIE PUTTING HIM IN BARN. DOOR SWINGS OPEN BUSTS HIS NOSE
(16) ZOMBIES GET OUT.
(17) ZOMBIE ATTACK.
(18) SOMEONE DIES! (WHO?)
(19) AFTERMATH w/ ZOMBIE KILLING FARMER KILLS SON.
(20)
(21) TYREESE GIVES GUNS TO CHRIS + JULIE
(22) IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME NOW. "I LOVE YOU." "I LOVE YOU." KISS.

CAST:

HERSHEL GREENE (49): SUSAN (16):
LACEY (35): KIDS (15)
ARNOLD (21): PATRICIA (35)
MAGGIE (19): MRS.
BILLY (18):

I don't think I spoke enough about the "That's where we keep the dead ones" line at the end of issue №10. It was a real turning point for me as a storyteller, I suppose, looking back. It was me learning how you can do a cliffhanger with a big punch that is just a simple line of dialogue. Or, at the very least, it was me getting better at it. It was a real strong finish to that issue, and it firmly established a trick in my toolbox that I definitely use frequently (if not too frequently) to this day.

But enough about issue №10. We're here to talk about issue №11!

Okay, first thing of note about this plot that I'll mention is the Greene family list of characters at the bottom. By this issue, I'd named them all in the script for №10. And here I'm making a note of all their ages so that I'll remember. And as I wrote issues, I'd dig this plot out and be like, "How old is Maggie again?" So this random piece of paper was pretty essential in the writing process. The last time I did a character list like this was issue №3, and it didn't include ages (thankfully... don't pay too close attention to time changing and characters aging... heh).

This list was written just in time to kill Lacey and Arnold, yeesh. Also, Hershel was ONLY 49 years old?! When I wrote this I was... 24... and I thought 49 was appropriate old farmer age? Yeesh. Now as I sit here at 42... oof.

I have to note as I was reading this issue over again for this (and it had been a while) I thought to myself, "Oh... I did the barn gag in ONE issue?!" I remembered it being at least two. And after it's been adapted for the TV show and is kind of the emotional basis for the whole second season, it seems like a missed opportunity to get through it so fast. BUT NO. IT'S NOT. It's kind of, I feel, why the comic is so successful and something that is sorely needed in more comics. ONE ISSUE STORIES.

It's also why I'm glad this series is being released only as single issues in color. This issue is a whole digestible piece. It's a chapter in a larger story, for sure--but it's a satisfying chapter, that stands alone really well. It's fun revisiting this stuff and thinking, "Damn, I could learn from this kid."

PAGE NOTES:

2: Glenn and "Girl" clothes messed up. This got moved to page 3, but holy crap, Glenn and Maggie sneaking off for sex during this heated conversation is totally rad. Bravo, young Robert. I don't know that I would ever break up such a dramatic scene in such a comedic way these days. I've learned nothing and am definitely not improving. The way Charlie handled it was masterful as well.

4-5: Important to note that I decided to have Tyreese be the voice of reason rather than having Rick just calm down on his own. Looking at the plot for this sequence, you can kind of see how I loosely break things down. It's a five-page scene, but the things in that scene are moved around as needed in the writing phase. It's mostly just random lines of dialogue that I'm piecing into a cohesive conversation after I write. There's even random parts written at the top of the page that I know go in this scene.

6: Clearly I decided "Lori's sleeping inside with Carl" wasn't needed information here.

7: I'm really taken with this Glenn and Maggie running gag this issue. It's just so funny and tucked into a really sad/brutal issue. ALTHOUGH, on the final page 7 in the issue, man, the double entendre dialogue using the words "hard" and "easy" are a little cringeworthy for me now. I can't imagine that was a weird accident, but I just can't remember myself thinking something like that was appropriate in that moment. Woof. Oh well, you win some, you lose some.

10: I love how I interpreted "Andrea apologizes to Allen." That is SO not what happens in the final scene.

14: "Good shot of zombie." At this point I was already acutely aware that the human drama was FAR outweighing the zombie action, so I was trying to get cool zombie visuals in the book whenever we could.

15,16,17: You'll notice these numbers are darker. If you look closely you can see 16 and 17 below them. I basically forgot 15 when I was numbering the page, but I caught it in the plotting stage. There have been times where I didn't catch it, and I have to add a page in the script stage to keep my page turns intact. Nobody's perfect!

18: Yes... "someone dies." I knew there needed to be a death here. I left it pretty wide open. I knew zombie Shawn was going to kill Arnold... so I guess Lacey was the added death. In hindsight... maybe should have laid off the Greene family a little bit here. I seem to recall Allen was an option here for a while... might have been the better choice.

20: This was left blank. It's a page turn moment. In the plot stage, I'm leaving things loose. Maybe I'll want to add a big moment here, maybe not? In the end, this left me room to add the Hershel potential suicide moment as I was writing, really heightening the consequences of the issue.

21-22: Man, the cliffhangers in this arc are on point. And the final page is a rare last page that has SEVEN panels. I almost never end a comic with a page that has more than two or three panels these days.

ISSUE 12
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

THU 12

(1) DEBBIE W/ MORNING SICKNESS

(2) HERSHEL [illegible]

(3) [illegible] NEAR SLEEP [illegible] IN THE [illegible]!

(4) ANDREA - BACK [illegible] OF W/ [illegible] RV

(5) RICK CLEANING OFF BARN W/ ALLEN.

(6) [illegible] DOG CARTWHEELS [illegible] STOP. RICK: THIS IS STUPID.

(7) RICK [illegible] EXTRA ROOMS.

(8) ~~[illegible]~~ THERESE + CAROL, [illegible] TORELLI, PULL BACK TO SHOW CHRIS + JULIE IN F/G

(9) [illegible] W/ MAGGIE. "WERE OUT?" "I CAN'T FIND ANY."

(10) RICK - YOU GOTTA LEAVE!

(11) ARGUMENT

(12) RICK: YOU GOTTA [illegible]! PULLS GUN-- AND [illegible]

(13) [illegible] ALL [illegible]

(14) [illegible]

(15) ON THE ROAD [illegible]

(16) COOKING RABBIT. "IT'S ALL WE'VE GOT." "BUT I'M STILL HUNGRY!"

(17) [illegible]

(18) OUT OF GAS.

(19) DALE + ANDREA: "DO GET RICK"

(20) [illegible]

(21) [illegible] NOT WORK. WE CAN CLEAN IT UP. WE CAN MAKE THIS WORK.

IT'S PERFECT.

(22) [illegible] CU ON RICK

This issue brings the second arc of the book to a close. It wraps up the roughly three issue adventure on Hershel's farm and introduces THE PRISON! Woo! So much crazy stuff to come.

Looking back, it really just blows my mind that we only spend three issues at Hershel's farm. The first six issues were really crammed-packed, but this run from issue №7 through issue №12 really shows that I STILL didn't have a sense of how much time I'd get to spend with this series. I was still rushing things, in my opinion.

Your mileage may vary.

I've seen all the complaints about the second season of the show spending too much time on Hershel's farm. I disagreed with them then, and I disagree with them now. I could easily see how this story would play out if the contents were expanded out another arc's worth of issues, if they arrived at the prison in issue №18 instead of this one. But, oh well. Maybe in a few decades, after this color reprint series has run its course, Charlie and I will go back and redo the whole series expanding everything in the first few issues and go down this same road once again... and I'll just... keep working on WALKING DEAD... in some form or another... for the rest of my life...

Okay, maybe not.

All joking aside, starting with the next arc, you can see that I really started opening things up. Maybe the pace of these 12 issues was better? Maybe you prefer the more compact storytelling? That's okay. For me, I feel like it was a real gift to be able to open things up and spend more time with these characters, getting to know them, building them up, setting the stage better for the stories to come. I feel like the success of this book allowed me the space to tell a better story. If you're reading this right now, you're a part of that. So thanks!

Looking at the plot for this issue... it's all pretty much the same as what we ended up with. It's not too often that so little changes from the plot to the script, but it does happen from time to time.

You can see from the plot that I had a pretty good grasp of this story. When the plots are very light like this one, it's because I know what I'm doing, and I don't bother writing it out when I can just write it up as I'm typing. That's why most of this plot is shorthand of just dialogue or things like "add more argument".

PAGE NOTES:

2: I swear that word is "BED". Sometimes my handwriting gets a little nutty. Yeesh.

4: No big revelation here. Dale didn't originally have a secret cabin or anything. I just wrote the wrong word like an idiot. This process can be somewhat embarrassing, so I hope you're enjoying it!

6: I probably should have kept the cartwheels line, I guess I just thought it was too flippant for Allen to say in response to Rick asking if he's okay. It might be a fun insight into my writing process, but yeah, the idea was that Allen was originally going to be dismissive. Rick asks, "You okay?" Allen responds, "I'm not going to be doing cartwheels anytime soon, but I'm fine." And they move on. But in the process of writing it, that little thing in your head buzzes and says, "Allen is not fine, he wouldn't say that," so you change it. Reading it now, the scene reads a little "I am sad. These are my feelings." So I can be a little critical of it... but it works for what it is.

9: I don't remember exactly, but this appears to be a scene where Maggie and Hershel talk about being out of food to set up another reason for Hershel to kick them out. In the end, I decided we didn't need it.

10-12: The reason this seems so repetitive is that it probably wasn't written in order. I sometimes will go "Page 12, that's a good page turn. Need to be here by this point" and I'll jot down a plot point. Then as I'm filling the issue out... I move things around a bit. Hence those arrows moving things down.

13: Originally I'd anticipated the argument being more drawn out... but I found room for the scene between Hershel and Otis on this page that gives Hershel a little bit of sympathy so you don't hate him completely.

14: Glenn staying behind wasn't in the plot at all! That was something I just came up with on the fly. SPOILERS: As I was writing this issue, I KNEW that once they were at the prison, they'd come back and get these characters and they'd all move to the prison, so I thought it made more sense with the Maggie relationship for Glenn to stay behind.

20-21: "SPREAD OF PRISON." The script for these two pages says barely more than that. Five minutes of work for me... probably two days for Charlie! Being a writer is the best!!

22: Whenever you can end on a dramatic close up of a character... do it. It's a crutch, but it's a crutch that I absolutely love. And drawing a big head is somewhat easier for a comic artist, so it's good to give Charlie a slight break after that two-page spread of a prison!

ISSUE 13

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD 13

(1) [illegible]

(2) [illegible] GAT[illegible]

GIRLS MAKE SURE THESE TOWER [illegible] ARE [illegible] CAN[illegible]

(3) [illegible] KILL [illegible] RICK + TYRESE [illegible]

[illegible] + [illegible]

(4) THEY [illegible] KILL ZOMBIES.

(5) ZOMBIES IN OPEN AREA DEAD. WHAT THAT [illegible]?

(6) ZOMBIE[illegible] OPEN DOORS [illegible]

(7) KILLING ZOMBIES, ALL THEY SPILL OUT

(8) LORI + CAROL TALKING [illegible]

(9) CARL + SOPHIA TALK ALSO. WANNA BE MY BOYFRIEND.

(10) ALLEN PLAYING W/ HIS SONS. "DO YOU MISS MOMMY?"

(11) JULIE + CHRIS DOING SOMETHING. "I [illegible]"

(12) [illegible] DONE. BURN THEM. (SHOOT [illegible]) THEN LINE [illegible] TO [illegible])

(3) CAMP. STARVING. SITTING AROUND TALKING. SAFE.

(4) SLEEPING RICK KEEPING WATCH "WERE [illegible]

(5) ↓

(6) THE NEXT MORNING (?) [illegible] SUN RISES OVER PRISON. BEGIN TO SEARCH INSIDE.

(17) GO [illegible] HALLS REALLY DIM. LIGHT ONLY FROM WINDOWS.

(18) KILL'N TOWER[illegible]

(19) [illegible]

(20) [illegible], CONTINUES [illegible].

(21) OKAY... [illegible] "THIS [illegible] W/ ZOMBIES.

GUN [illegible]

(22) SPLASH--CAN WE GET [illegible] OFF.

END

Oh, the prison! Possibly our coolest location for the entire series. We're finally here!

If you dig out your copy of THE WALKING DEAD DELUXE issue №2, where we printed the original series proposal in the back, you'll see that I mentioned a high school as an eventual location, that would "become a well-defended stronghold, as life in America turns into something not unlike medieval times."

Clearly the high school was changed to the prison. We did eventually use the high school later for Ezekiel's Kingdom, though.

The high school I attended, Harrison County High in Cynthiana, Kentucky, was a building that was shaped like a big "O" and it had a courtyard in the middle that was completely surrounded by the building itself. Funny enough, this amazing courtyard was pretty much only used for... smoke break. We lived in tobacco country so even into the late '90s high school kids were afforded a designated time after lunch to... y'know... smoke cigarettes.

I didn't spend a lot of time there, myself.

Regardless, when I would daydream about apocalyptic scenarios, as one does, I always thought about how defendable that building would be, and how you'd have a nice safe courtyard at the center, protected from all the zombies.

In the end, though, when writing this comic... I decided a prison was way cooler. I mean, how crazy is it to have the characters talking about how nice it is and how much they're looking forward to living there. That's how messed up the world of THE WALKING DEAD is. Characters see prison and say, "It's home."

Reading over this issue again (POTENTIAL SPOILERS FOR WAY LATER IN THE SERIES, YOU'VE BEEN WARNED) it's so interesting to read the earliest interactions between Rick and Andrea. I honestly didn't even have an inkling of where their relationship would eventually go. So reading this issue with hindsight, it's kind of neat seeing them start to get to know each other.

TV SHOW NOTE: The cell block shown on page 19 was matched SO CLOSELY on the show it's crazy. Looking at that page now I can say, "I stood there," and it's really nuts. Compare it to the show. It's pretty cool.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Anytime you can do a silent full-page splash to start an issue... do it.

2: How tedious should I be with noting little changes? I SWEAR there are big swerves coming that will make these entries way more interesting. Just wait until we get to issue №18. There's way bigger stuff than "Oh, look... Dale was originally supposed to go into the prison yard to clean it out with Rick, Tyreese and Andrea."

5: I own "ZOMIES" now. If anyone tries to use that I will sue you. Look for my kids zombie book, ZOMIES, coming in 2022.

6: I decided Tyreese saying "..." was better than Rick saying, "Oh, shit."

8: This was moved to page 11.

9-11: This stuff was moved ALL around in the writing. Originally, I wanted to do something kind of creepy with Allen where he was talking to his twins about Donna's death, somewhat inappropriately. I wanted to explore when a parent has no one to talk to about something and talks to their kids instead... and how damaging that can be for the kid. I opted for Allen being emotional by himself on the RV instead. I also combined the Julia, Chris, Carl and Sophia scenes into one scene.

12: This was expanded to two pages. It takes a lot of room in comics to show quiet, waiting moments because you have to move from panel to panel with little change to show the passage of time.

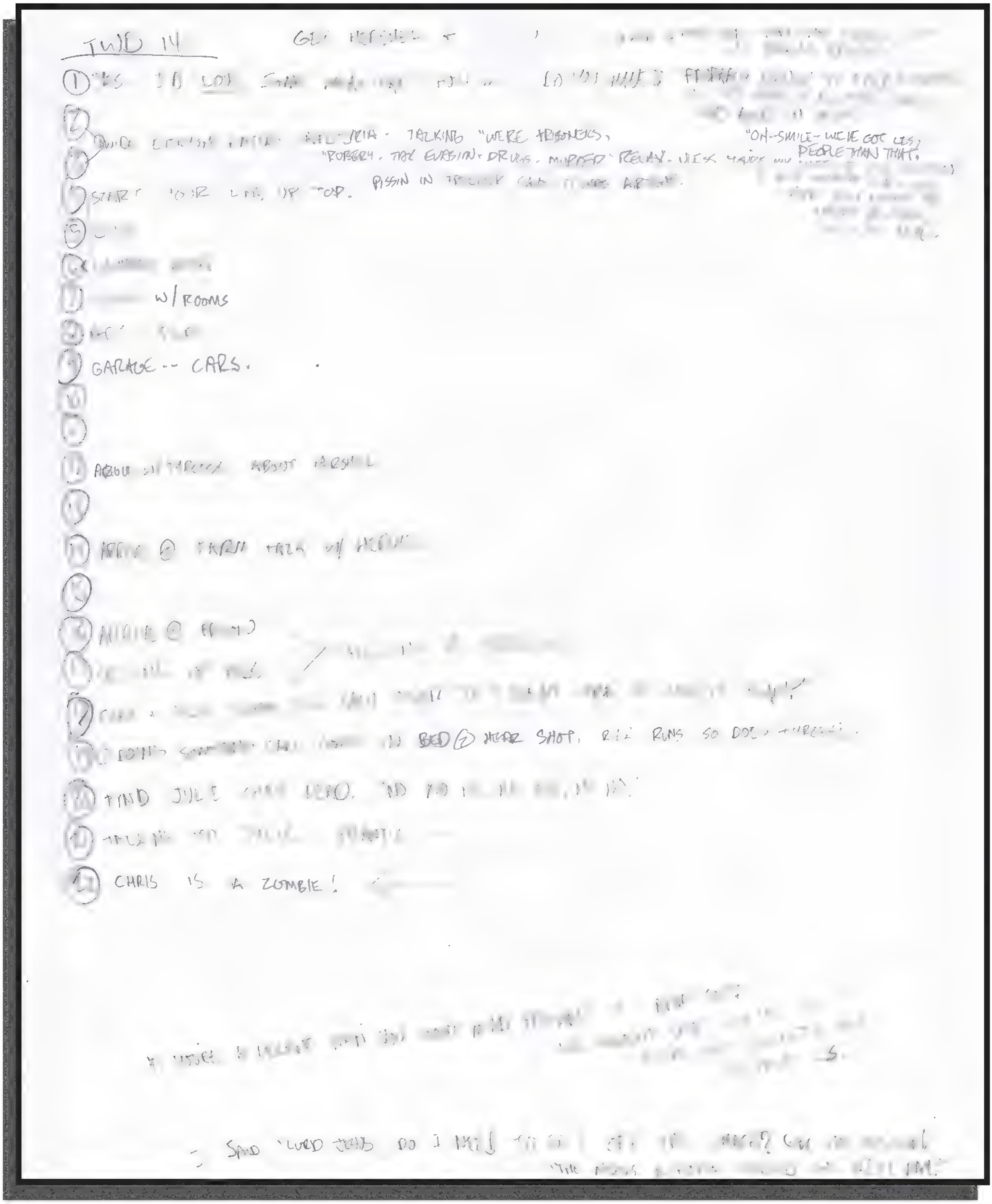
13-16: All of this stuff was moved around and expanded into page 18, leaving us less room for exploring the prison and killing zombies... but we didn't need it. Right? Oh, you want more zombies? Sorry!

17-20: Maybe it would have been neat seeing a more detailed exploration of the prison before the final page, but, eh... I don't miss it.

21: Fun callback to the opening issue and Rick's cafeteria moment.

22: Is this the first goofy cliffhanger in the comic? I believe so. I mean after those first 12 issues... we needed something a little light-hearted, right? And meatloaf is the funniest food. It's a loaf of meat... who thought of that? So weird. Anyway... everyone's favorite character AXEL is now in the book. WOO!!

ISSUE 14
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman



Man. What an issue this is. Holy heck that's a ton of stuff. Get to know the prisoners, settle into the prison, bring back Hershel, Maggie, Glenn, and everyone else back on the farm (and in TWO PAGES no less, efficient!) and still squeeze in the Julie and Chris botched suicide pact! Holy crap! I haven't reread this series in a few years (my last reread was as I was ramping up for the end of the series five years ago or so), so it's been fun revisiting it in color for these entries.

ZOMBIES. Let's talk about that for a minute. Holy heck I used the z-word a metric shit-ton around this time. I vaguely recall using roamers and lurkers around this time. I guess I transition into that more later? I'd originally intended to not use the word that much, if at all, but eventually I just decided, whatever... they're zombies, it's a cool word, let's just run with it. With the television show NEVER using it, I do wonder if it's jarring for some. I was the guy on set and in the writers room always saying zombie when everyone else is saying walker, so what do I know?

Frank Darabont was the one who coined the term "walkers". It's really pretty smart to refer to zombies in "The Walking Dead" as "walkers", and I really wish I'd been the one to come up with it. The idea was always that this story had to take place in a world where zombie fiction didn't exist. Otherwise, the characters would say things like "You just shoot them in the head--haven't you seen *Night of the Living Dead?*" Makes sense.

Looking at my plot, there's a rip at the top of it and a whole chunk of paper missing. These sheets of paper traveled with me to conventions, and I worked on many a plane ride on them, so some of them are in better shape than others. I don't think any of them have any drinks spilled on them, so I consider that a win. But if you're curious, I'd wager at the top there it said, "Get Hershel & Glenn" to remind me to bring them back in this issue.

More random bits of dialogue written in the top right and at the bottom of the page. I think you can see in the issue where these fell. Again, this stuff would pop into my head and I wouldn't really know what page they'd fall on, but I'd write them out around the edges of the page, leaving room for the page-by-page plot, and then I'd work this dialogue in where it fit.

Also, this plot is LOOSE. There are other plots like this coming up in the run (just you wait), but sometimes when I have a really solid plan for an issue, and when they're as packed as this one, I don't spend too much time on the written plot and I just dive in on the script because I know where I'm going.

PAGE NOTES:

1-3: Little getting-to-know-you sequence. In the plotting stage, I don't think I planned to have Rick recap the state of the world to the prisoners, but in the writing of it I realized they'd need it. That caused this scene to get expanded to page 6.

4: So this becomes page 7. This is where the tour starts.

5-9: So this is just a rough road map of where they're going. What they're saying was more or less figured out on the fly in the scripting phase. This section could have just said "tour", but I at least figured out the places they would see before the scripting started. I'm sure I was still kicking myself at the keyboard saying, "Robert, you could have figured so much more out before we were here." This section did end up covering fewer pages and was wrapped up by issue №10, almost getting this script back in line with the plot.

10-11: BLANK. I knew by this point I'd be moving things around, hence that arrow next to the number 4 moving it down to number 6, so I figured I needed two pages here to catch up.

12: This scene actually gets moved UP to page 11 somehow. Man, this plot was all over the place. I knew arriving at Hershel's farm would be a short scene and would work better as a page turn, so I figured out a way to have this argument happen a page earlier.

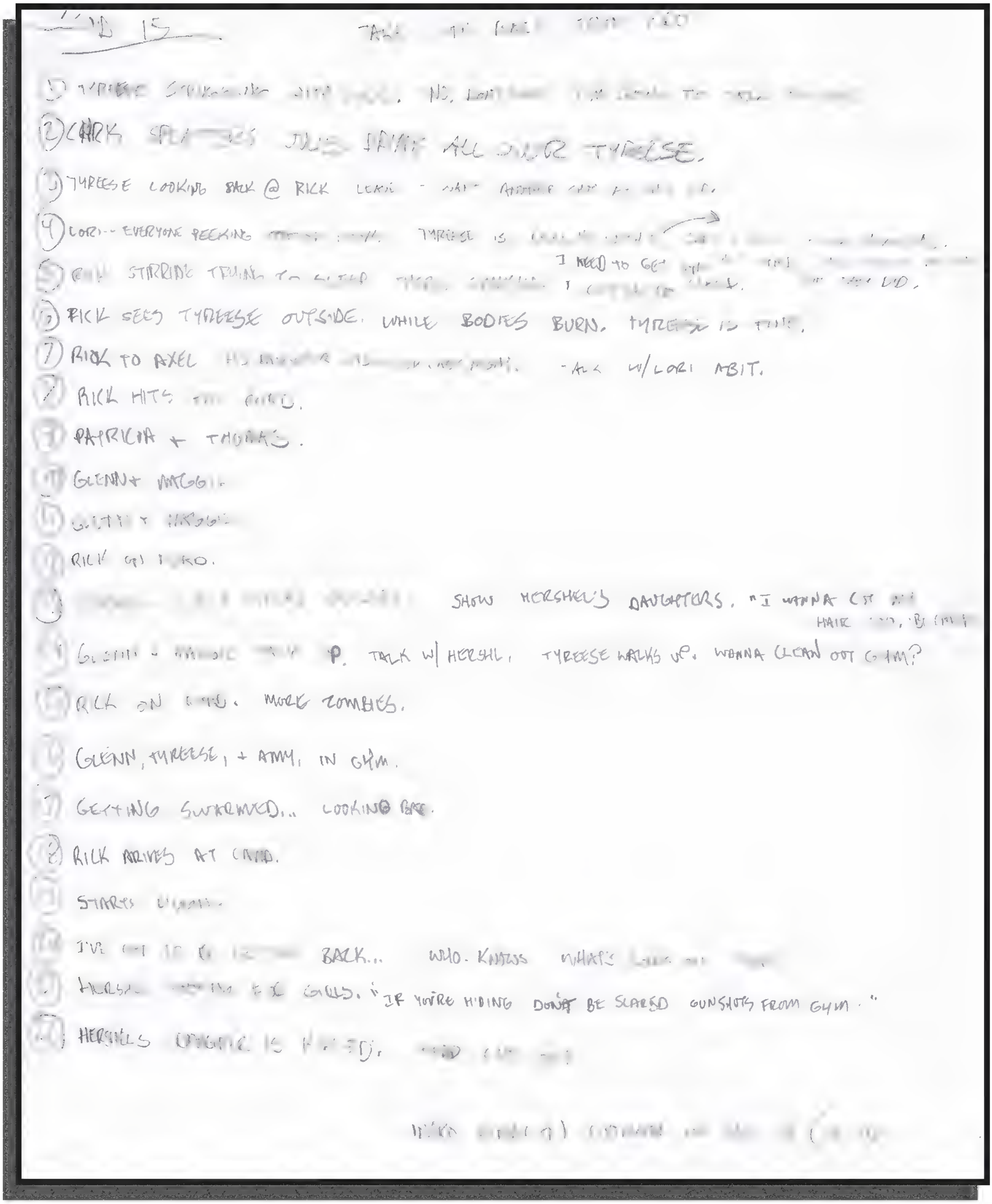
14: See? I knew this would have to be a page turn (so an even numbered page), but I thought it would fall a little earlier. So impressed with myself that I squeeze this business onto two pages.

16: And just like that they're all back at the prison. But this got moved up to make way for the Lori hormones scene (was that necessary? Eh.) and the check-in on Lori's pregnancy page. The "talking to Hershel" bit lands on page 17 in the comic which allows the plot and the script to FINALLY line up starting with page 18.

18: Clearly in the plotting phase it was going to be much more obvious what Julie and Chris were planning in this scene. I'd been trying to make readers think they were planning to kill Tyreese "so they can be together forever", and I figured this would be the scene where we reveal what they're doing. I very wisely decided to use this page to heighten the suspicion around what they're doing even more here. Which works way better.

20-22: This was a big moment where I was going to finally reveal that you don't have to be bitten to become a zombie. That was all planned in the plotting stage, but I didn't bother to write it down in the plot because I knew I wouldn't forget.

ISSUE 15
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman



Another packed issue. And man, rereading this... it really hits you how absolutely brutal this comic series is. Open with Tyreese strangling Chris, end with Rachel and Susie decapitated? My lord, young Robert Kirkman, what issues were you dealing with? And man, oh man, Charlie Adlard just killing it this issue. That image of zombie Shane is burned into my memory. So many iconic shots this issue. Whew!

Looking over the plot for this issue, it's another issue that went more or less by the book. Fun fact, some of the dialogue from Rick talking to Shane in this issue harkens back to me considering at the time to kill Rick instead of Shane. This issue features Rick thinking about how that would go, definitely a reflection of me as the writer also considering those possibilities.

Big part of this issue, the revelation that you don't have to be bitten to turn into a zombie. Looking back, I think it unfolded nicely. Another huge turning point in this series for sure.

Also, just to show how haphazardly some of these issues come together, look at the note at the bottom of this plot. "Intro Amazon woman in this ish. (or 16)" That's obviously referencing Michonne. So I'd considered introducing her in issue №15 or №16. I knew she would just roll up to the prison like she eventually did in issue №19, so that could happen any time. The reason she got bumped to №19? Well... I was talking to Eric Stephenson at the time about how big characters like Cable, Deadpool, Beta Ray Bill or Elektra were introduced on the COVER of their debut issue, and that made them special. It showed the reader how important they were because they showed up right on the front of the book.

Comics are solicited in a catalogue months in advance. At this time, when I was writing issue №15, that cover of Rick on the bike had already been drawn and was in the catalogue. So while I could have slipped Michonne in the issue, she wouldn't be able to appear on the cover. What was the next issue to be solicited? Well... issue №19. So based on Eric's recommendation, her introduction was pushed back a few issues so that she could make her glorious first appearance on the cover of the issue she debuted in.

Funny how the logistical nuts and bolts of comics effects the storytelling, huh?

You can say that's a bad thing, but you'd be wrong. I strongly feel knowing the structure of things and allowing the publishing to help set the pacing makes for a better overall experience. I'm an "all parts of the buffalo" guy when it comes to writing. "Writing for the trade" is only a bad thing when that means padding out a 3-issue story into a 6-issue story by adding a bunch of boring stuff.

Just so you know... Months in advance when the cover is being drawn, I already know Julie and Chris have done their thing, and Rick takes a motorcycle to dig up and rekill Shane. That's pretty much it. So I told Tony, "Cool shot of Rick on a motorcycle." Because I'm always looking for cool images that don't reveal TOO much of what's inside. But things like Tyreese losing his cool in the gym against zombies? I don't think of that stuff until this plotting stage.

ANYWAY... let's dive into page notes:

2: I mean, yow... just brutal.

3: GREAT example of subtle, strong dialogue in the plot that I wasn't brave enough to actually use in the script. "I want another shot at this kid" tells the whole story way better than the clunky involved dialogue that appeared in the issue. Shame on me.

5: On the flip side, "There's something I gotta do" here... not necessary at all. Glad I left that out. Silent page is ALWAYS better if you can pull it off. Let the art do its job, and stay out of its way. Look at how Rick's eyes WIDEN in that last panel on this page. "Oh, shit... I need to dig up Shane," he's thinking. It's SO CLEAR. Bravo, Charlie!

8-12: Good example of my shorthand in these plots. I know what these scenes are. I don't waste time writing them out.

13-14: This is a weird one. In the plot here, Rachel and Susie want to get haircuts BEFORE Maggie and Glenn walk up with their new haircuts. I don't remember if that was just a goof or me being sloppy in the plot, or if I'd have something else driving Rachel and Susie into the barbershop. Lost to the sands of time, unfortunately.

15-18: Man, the alternating pages and how swiftly the beats of this story are handled is a skill I feel like I've lost. These scenes would take up so much more space in my current work. Do I suck now? Is the internet, right? Damn it. I just can't believe I handled this stuff so efficiently. I'm so invested in mining the most emotion possible out of a scene these days, I'd have definitely given these scenes more room for that these days... but maybe there's a lesson to learn here.

19-20: I don't think I initially planned for Rick to talk to Shane here. It was only in the scripting stage that I decided the scene needed more meat on the bones, and that it'd be nice to see a one-sided conversation between Rick and Shane.

22: Man... poor Hershel. I'm awful to... most of my characters, it's true. But if there's one I was the most brutal to... maybe it was Hershel. I know he's not real, but I genuinely feel bad for everything that happened to him. Maybe it's that I was NOT a parent yet when I wrote this scene, but seeing it now, having children of my own... it's hard. Yeesh.

ISSUE 16
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

TWD 16

1. RICK SEES TONS o' ZOMBIES "OH SHIT."
2. HERSHEL -- MAGGIE ARRIVES.
3. HEADS COME ALIVE.
4. THREESE IN GYM.
5. LEAVE HIM.
6. CUT TO RICK
7. GLENN [illegible] "THREESE IN GYM!"
8. ~~[illegible]~~ ON LOR GLENN: "WHERE'S MAGGIE?" BILLY: "WHERE'S MY DAD? MY SISTERS?"
9. DEX WALKS UP. "WHAT'S GOING ON?
10. GLENN + BILLY WALK UP ON HERSHEL + MAGGIE
11. CUT TO LORI PRACTICALLY ATTACKING DEX. PULLS OUT AMBROSIA. LOCKS CELL (CHAIN + PADLOCK.)
12. LOR + CAROL TALKING. CAROL KISSES LORI. "I WAS GOING TO TAKE CHRIS'S SON [illegible]."
13. ANDREA + DALE TALK ABOUT LIFE SPAN
14. RICK RETURNS ZOMBIES @ FENCE
15. GLENN TELLS ABOUT THREESE. HE WAS [illegible]
16. THREESE IN GYM - KILLED ALL ZOMBIES.
17. ~~AXEL + ANDREW TALK. CALL THOMAS FAGGOT~~ LORI [illegible] CUTTIES.
18. RICK TALKS TO DEX "DID YOU DO IT? DON'T FUCKING LIE TO ME!" DEX: MORE PEOPLE.
19. ALLEN - FUCKING CREEPY WHILE TALKING TO KIDS.
20. THREESE: WE'RE ALL DEAD, RICK. SHE JUST DOESN'T HAVE TO [illegible] THE BULLSHIT ANYMORE.
21. ANDREA + THOMAS IN LAUNDRY ROOM. "WHAT BRINGS YOU ALL THE WAY DOWN HERE?" THIS MUCH IS TRUE. I AM NEVER CLEANING AGAIN.
22. "I'M GOING TO CUT OFF YOUR HEAD

Great commentary on race from a young Robert Kirkman here. It's always the quiet, nerdy white guy you really need to be scared of. Take note, kids!

I feel like these issues are where Charlie really started hitting his stride and really made the book his own. On the eve of Michonne and The Governor making their debut, it's cool to notice just how quickly this series evolved and changed from what it started as in those first six issues. We're in high gear for sure right now, as each of these Cutting Room Floor sections is always commenting on "Wow, a lot happened in this issue, huh?", and this one is no different.

I can't recall why we never did the serial killer in the prison storyline on the TV show. I always thought it was a compelling arc. Having the prison be the ultimate safe place in this world, and then immediately show that it's actually the most dangerous. I have heard the Thomas reveal was something people saw coming as soon as he admitted he was in prison for "tax evasion", but honestly, at the time, I didn't realize that people who go to prison for tax evasion typically go to different prisons than people who do violent crimes. It's sometimes horrifying how being a professional writer kind of puts all your shortcomings on display in a weird way. Maybe I should do more research... but, hey... where's the fun in that?

I do recall that the rapid deaths of dozens of Hershel's kids was deemed too brutal (and a bit odd) by the writer's room on *The Walking Dead*... and they were probably right. Poor Hershel.

It's also funny to note that I recall Axel being a really likable, popular character, but, man... he's a total scumbag in this issue! Does a funny dialogue tick actually redeem him? We'll see!

Okay... let's do some page notes:

1: Good to keep it simple when you can, I say!

2-3: Another good example of my shorthand in these plots. Not a lot written here for this scene... but it's all there.

4: At some point when going from plotting to writing, I wisely made the choice to not show Tyreese in this scene at all. I think that makes his "death" feel more real.

5-6: So... the shower scene wasn't in the plot at all. This does happen from time to time. I'll plot a scene for two or three pages, and when I script it, it'll take much less space, so I end up with a free page. I'll usually come up with some short bit on the fly to fill that space or I'll expand some other part of the plot. Here, I decided to add in some Axel scenes to flesh him out. At some point I decided I didn't need this "cut to Rick" scene I'd planned for in the plot.

10: Didn't plan in the plot for Glenn to be the one to shoot the girls. I kind of wish I'd made more of a meal of this. There should have been a scene where Hershel thanked Glenn for doing this, and that's what finally won him over. It's more of a throwaway thing as it is, but for whatever reason, it really strikes me as significant that Glenn, the new boyfriend, takes this burden on himself when Hershel can't.

12: Sometimes things in the plot aren't written in order because I write what's in the scene, Carol kissing Lori, then I think of some dialogue that leads into the scene, and jot that down.

14: "Zombies @ fence" is just a note to remind me "cover scene goes here" so that I made sure to work the cover scene into the issue. There are later issues where I don't bother to do this.

16: Real bummer of a page turn. The Tyreese reveal is in the LAST PANEL? You have to read the panels before it while seeing that Tyreese is okay in the last panel? Shame on you, young Robert! But I guess that's the kind of sacrifice you make to have a jam-packed issue.

18: Lots of dialogue shorthand here.

19: YEP. Nailed it.

20: Tyreese dialogue kind of tipping off what would come in issue №24.

22: Solid cliffhanger! The dialogue tweak in the final issue is an improvement, I feel.

ISSUE 17

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD 17

[illegible]

(1) [illegible]

(2) [illegible] (3) [illegible] TO SEE HIM

(4) [illegible] TO HIM. [illegible]

(5) ~~MORE RICK + LORI TALKING~~. HERSHEL MAGGIE, BILLY: IT'S YOUR FUKING FAULT.

(5) ANDREW + DEXTER. GUN ROOM IN OTHER WING "GET ME OUT OF HERE."

(6) DALE, AXEL, + GLENN KILLING ZOMBIES @ FENCE.

(7) MORE ZOMBIE KILLING.

(8) CAROL + TYREESE FUCK IN GYM.

(9) ALLEN WATCHING KIDS. SOPHIA CARL "HE SCARES ME" "H[illegible] BE NICE--BUT NOW HE'S WEIRD,"

(10) ANDREA RUNS OUT EAR CUT OF, GAS." IN CREEK (2) THOMAS AFTER HER, (3) CLOSE ON RICK.

RICK RICK DELIVERS BEATING. LORI LEAVES THEN COMES TO STOP HIM. RICK HITS HER.

LORI [illegible] LORI GOES BACK TO BEATING THOMAS. TYREES STOPS HIM.

RICK'S HANDS ARE HURT. THOMAS AIN'T MOVING.

SPEED-- EVERYONE SHOCKED- RICK DOWN-- THOMAS DOWN.

(11) (1) WIDE RICK: WE NEED TO SET AN EXAMPLE - WE DO NOT KILL (2) WIDE TYREES (3) WIDE WE WON'T TOLERATE IT. YOU KILL--YOU DIE.

(12) CLOSE ON RICK "WE'RE GOING TO HANG HIM."

So I like to buy original art. I would say it's my only vice, but let's be honest... cheeseburgers. Anyway, I've always been enamored with original comic book art. It's just so fun to look at and it's a piece of history and I just love it. When Charlie came onto the book, he'd asked me if I wanted the original art as well. I absolutely jumped at the chance. When you're as fast as Charlie, you produce a metric ton of original art each year and well, what would someone do with all the art from a little forgettable black and white zombie book anyway. It's not like Batman is on any of these pages, who would want it?

So Charlie agreed to just let me buy out the original art for each issue for a fee. It was nearly 20 years ago, but I'm going to say that fee was around $1,000. So I pay Charlie and extra $1k per issue and I get all that glorious original art, how cool is that? Of course I jumped at the chance!

Then after paying for two issues... I realized I couldn't afford it. I've spoken publicly about how close to debtors' prison I was early on in my career and when this series started I was still very much in bad shape. I couldn't afford to dole out $1,000 a month for what would eventually be... y'know... millions of dollars' worth of artwork. So I had to contact Charlie and tell him I couldn't do it and had to back out of the deal. I'd already paid for two issues and he'd already sent me issue №7, his first issue, so he said, "I owe you an issue of art, so just let me know which one you want and I'll send it over."

Oooooh, man... which issue would I get? Well... that issue was this very issue. Issue №17. When this issue came in, it's was just stunning. Rick beating up Thomas. Rick in that chair on page 2 is great. That two-page spread after the beatings and, man... that final splash page? It's a GREAT issue of original art. Glorious in fact. What's funny to me, looking back, is that at the time I thought, "This is going to be an important issue." The beating of Thomas, Rick messing up his hand, the attack on Andrea, just tons of memorable things happen in this issue. I really thought if we were lucky enough to have a long run on the book, this would be one of the high points for sure. But man, looking at the full run of the series, do people even remember Thomas? There's SO MANY bigger, crazier, more monumental issues.

So now when I tell people I own all the art for issue №17 they say, "Why issue №17?" And I kind of chuckle to myself.

There's a lot of interesting story stuff to go over for this issue, too... but it really ties heavily into issue №18, so I'm just going to hold it for then. Issue №18 features our first big diversion from my original plot so that'll be fun to talk about. Hype.

Let's just dive into page notes:

Top of page: This was the "Rick beats the hell out of guy" issue. That note is just there to remind me, that this is that issue.

1: I guess Thomas was originally going to lock him and Andrea in a cell or something. Didn't need that.

4: I believe I was going to have Rick and Lori talking about Shane here and decided I didn't need it. I'm not so sure about that now. Maybe it would have been good to have them talk about it more, but maybe I was saving it for next issue. Instead, Billy gets to yell at Hershel and blame him for the death of his sisters. Man, I still feel really bad about the Greene family... sheesh.

6-7: Looking back I can't decide if the tedious scene of Dale and Glenn figuring out how to best kill zombies through a fence is good or kind of pointless and a waste of space. I guess seeing characters work out the mechanics of things can be sort of fun. Oh well!

8: Keeping it classy, young Kirkman.

10: Was I originally going to have Andrea's whole ear "cut of" (heh) I don't really recall.

12-13: Man... Rick was originally going to hit Lori when she tried to stop the beating. This plays into what I'm going to talk about next issue, but I'm CLEARLY trying to push these two to a breaking point and it's just not sticking. Clearly I realized having Rick hit Lori was just too far to go, it just didn't work. I settled for the grating "shut the fuck up" moment later in the issue, which is... pretty damn harsh on its own.

18-20: You'll see this more and more as the series progresses, but when I'd have a pretty clear idea of the conversation, there was no reason to write it down in the plot, I'd just leave the space for it and go straight to script. It's not blank because I didn't know what to put there, it's blank because I knew exactly what was going to go there.

ISSUE 18

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

END 14

(1) WIDE CU ON CORI: ~~LIKE HELL WE ARE!~~ CORI W/ CARL -- FREAKING OUT. -IS DAD CRAZY?! -THANKS AL...
NO THAT MAN WAS BAD BAD LIKE SHANE? IS HE COME TO KILL US!
(2) RICK COMES IN. NOT NOW RICK.
(3) LET ME SEE MY SON! HE DOESN'T WANT TO SEE YOU RIGHT NOW... WIDE: CLOSE ON RICK
(4) DALE W/ ANDREA. FIRST AID-- WASH HERSHEL COULD HEAD. SEE RICK-- HEY BUDDY-- LET'S...
(5) HERSHEL HITS BILLY-- "RESPECT YOUR ELDERS!"
(6) RICK RELEASES DEX.
(7) RICK WALKS IN. HERSHEL ...
THEY GO
ANDREA + DALE TALK ABOUT LEAVING IN RV-- GOING OFF ON OWN. "WE CAN TAKE WHAT HE WON'T GIVE US."
TYREESE + GLENN PUT HIM IN FREEZER-- TAKE HIM OUT SUFFOCATING IS TO GOOD. "WE'RE ... HANG HIM."
PAT WATCHING TYREESE. "I FORGIVE YOU." "I WANT TO WATCH."
GLENN + TYREESE LOOKING IN IN CELL "GONNA GO CHECK ON MAGGIE.
PATRICIA LETS THOMAS OUT. "I CAN'T LET THEM KILL YOU. "I SAW WHERE THE KEPT THE KEY.
THOMAS ATTACKS PATRICIA. CORI COMES.
(8) MAGGIE EXITS CELL W/ GLENN -- FIGHT.
MAGGIE KILLS THOMAS- "I FELL MUCH BETTER NOW.
RICK-- TYREESE, HERSHEL RUN UP.
FEEDING THOMAS TO ZOMBIES.

DEX + ANDY ARE LEAVING- "BEFORE ... PLACE JUST IS HANG ... ANDY. ALL STAYS.
~~CORI + ... A DIVORCE!~~ SPLASH DEXTER + ANDREW LEAVING PRISON.

THERE'S NOTHING OF US ... JUST TO KILLING EACH OTHER.
HERSHEL HELPS.
DONE, GOOD

1. FOLLOW UP ON: HERSHEL + BILLY

Okay, first of all, look over at that plot on the opposite page. That thing is CHAOS.

This issue was a big one, as far as changes go. The first big change... according to the cover, there was going to be a hanging in this issue. Yes, that was the plan. Originally Thomas was going to get a proper "hung by a noose" hanging. It was going to be an Old West execution. Somewhere along the way, long after the cover had been drawn, I decided against that. Maybe to give Maggie a big moment?

The biggest change though... and it's all pretty clear if you read previous issues with this in mind (especially last issue), was that this issue was meant to build to the "divorce" of Rick and Lori! That was meant to be the big cap off of issue No. 18 which becomes the end of the volume No. 3 trade paperback collection.

I'd become really fascinated with the concept of an apocalyptic divorce. What happens when two people want to end their marriage in the apocalypse? There's no lawyers. No court. Nothing to make it official. No one to legally mediate a separation. So you just decide you're not married anymore and carry on with life? How does that work?

Rick had gone against Lori's wishes and given Carl a gun. He'd started making a lot of unilateral decisions without consulting her, and we were showing her getting more and more angry about it. The decision to hang Thomas was the final straw. She just couldn't take it anymore, and so the plan was for them to have a big, huge blowout fight, leading to the final page which would be a big close-up on Lori Grimes saying, "I want a divorce."

Really? What? How? What does that mean? Where does that go? I was really excited about exploring the emotional story that would come from that.

But as I was writing the big "fight", the dialogue just didn't work. I could feel myself forcing Lori to say things her character wouldn't logically say, opinions she should have based on who I'd built her to be. It was a profound experience as a writer. I realized I was breaking a character to accommodate a plot. And you know... looking back, was it even a plot that would be that interesting? Apocalyptic divorce? Really, Robert? What the hell were you thinking?

So, after plotting the full issue I just changed the plan. I allowed the characters to dictate the story instead of the other way around. Rick and Lori came to a reasonable understanding... and we ended with a cliffhanger... which made the end of the third volume kind of weird, but that was fine, right? Right?

Page notes:

1: Close-up on Lori: "Like hell we are!" A direct response to Rick's "We're going to hang him." from last issue. Even the opening scene was changing!

2-3: Clearly, this was originally a much more heated scene where Carl didn't want to see Rick because he was scared of him, and Lori kept Rick from seeing his son.

13: "I saw where they kept the key." Sometimes there are things in the plot that feel like they need explaining, like how Patricia got the key to Thomas's cell... but then when you're writing the script you realize it's just tedious and doesn't need to be mentioned.

15-18: This is all pretty much by the numbers here. Kind of odd how tightly this part follows the plot.

19-20: I feel like by the time I got here I knew I'd be changing things up, so I left room to figure things out in the script.

21: Originally, Dexter and Andrew were going to just leave the prison voluntarily. The "We've done our time, I guess it's time for you to do yours," for page 22 was going to be their last line before exiting.

22: Lori: "I want a divorce!" This was crossed out AFTER I'd started scripting. After rewriting the opening argument between Rick and Lori, I knew the end was changing. So I went back to the plot and devised Andrew and Dexter leaving as the NEW ending.

Then at some point I realized, they wouldn't leave... they'd want to stay and it's more dramatic to have them forcing Rick and Crew to leave. So that's how we ended up with the ending in the book. This whole issue was one change after the other, leading to the final product. Not many issues have been this chaotic behind the scenes, but there were a few in the run. Fun times!

ISSUE 19

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

IWD (19) [illegible] OTIS

(1) OTIS -- HORSE + BUGGY [illegible] SAVES. PATRICIA "YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T KILL [illegible]!" [illegible] UP TO THEM.

(2) [illegible]

(3) C-UNS & WHERE'D [illegible]

(4) ZOMBIES EMERGE FROM "C BLOCK".

(5)

(6)

(7)

(8)

DUPLI-KATE

MULTI-PLAY

(9) OTIS ARRIVES. FIGHTS ZOMBIES [illegible] UPS

(10) ——↑

(11) MICHONNE SAVES DAY.

(12)

(13)

(14) MORE FIGHTING DEX, TYREESE, RICK, GLENN, ANDREA, HERSHEL, ANDREW, DALE, PATRICIA — AXEL, ALLEN. BILLY

(15)

(16) SHOOTS DEX

(17) [illegible] SAFE PLACE TO [illegible]

(18) YOUR SHOVEL.

(19) TALKS TO RICK.

(20) KILLS ZOMBIES COMES INSIDE

(21) RICK + TYREESE TALK LIST EVERYONE WHO'S KILLED SOMEONE,

(22) SPLASH "SO MUCH FOR THAT WHOLE "NO KILLING" THING, HUH?"

[illegible] I DID [illegible] ILL [illegible] I WOULD [illegible]

TYREESE [illegible] KILLS [illegible]

AND EVEN [illegible] PLACE TO [illegible]

As I covered last issue, the plan changed. Originally this issue would have had Rick reeling over the fact that Lori wanted to get a divorce while devoting a lot of time to Michonne's introduction to the book. But because of my last-minute changes... I had to resolve this spur of the moment Dexter and Andrew revolt plot. Which probably lessened Michonne's page time in the issue, at least a little bit.

MICHONNE

Probably the most popular character in THE WALKING DEAD history. I feel like she edges out Daryl Dixon because he's only in the tv show, but maybe that's just me.

Originally, I'd conceived of her as a character for a different book. I pitched an ill-fated sci-fi zombie book called *Dead Planet* to Image a few months before I scrapped it and came up with THE WALKING DEAD. Michonne wasn't mentioned in that pitch, and she was never drawn or designed back then, but I'd planned to introduce her in the second or third story arc of that book. A sword wielding woman with two zombie companions who crossed the wasteland to meet up with our core cast. Maybe fits a little more in a sci-fi book when you think about it, right?

I don't clearly recall why I put her in WALKING DEAD. As time went on, I wanted to put stranger and stranger characters in, as living in the zombie apocalypse made people weirder. That's how we got to the Governors, Negans, Ezekiels and Princesses of the book. I know I'd gotten flack in letters columns for not having the strongest female characters in the book, and rightly so. Andrea's ascension was definitely a slow build so maybe I thought it was best to insert Michonne to get another zombie killing female badass in the book sooner.

Looking at the written plot, well... you can see how loose this thing was. That's a byproduct of knowing roughly what I wanted to do with Michonne and really scrambling to wrap up this Dexter business.

Rick shooting Dexter really became a character defining moment for Rick and really set up a lot of the conflict that was brewing in him. But if I'm honest... it was probably just the quickest solution to wrapping up this new plot I could come up with. If I'd planned this out better, I definitely wouldn't have undercut Rick's "you kill, you die" proclamation one issue after he made it. I'm kind of making our lead character look like a fool... but somehow it just works. It's cool to see Rick so out of his depth, seemingly unable to lead. It's cool because it gives him a place to grow, to become that leader you want him to be. So it was a good happy accident, writing-wise. But definitely mostly an accident.

Page notes:

1: So clearly, this one page was turned into a three-page Michonne scene. Better way to open the issue for sure. We didn't need to see Otis out in his horse and buggy before the introduction of Michonne. Easy enough to just establish that Otis is out within the Michonne scene. Saves space, gives us more Michonne.

2-4: So this bit gets moved back to pages 4 and 5. Page 4 in the plot becomes pages 6-7. The reason I leave these pages blank is that I know I'm going to do this and that's why I just jump down to page 9. This was much easier when I was younger, sometimes the plot to script transition was a matter of minutes. I'd dive right into scripting as soon as the plot was done. These days... it can be days or sometimes weeks after I've finished a plot when I get around to scripting... so I write WAY MORE things down to make sure I don't forget them. I'm an adult!

11: "Michonne saves the day." I obviously moved this to page 12 so it would be a page turn. You can't intro a character on an odd numbered right-hand page! You gotta debut cool shit on those page turns! And what an entry she made! Adlard was just killing it on this issue, right, guys?!

16: This was definitely Rick shooting Dexter at all times. I didn't leave his name out because I was figuring out who would do it. Also, fun to note that as loose as this plot is, this DID fall on page 16 in the final comic. This might have been the first thing I wrote on this plot. I'd often put the biggest page turn moment in the plot first, and just kind of guess where they'll fall. Often times when the plot was done, it would be right. It's not that hard to guess, really, when you know how much wrap up time you'll need after that incident. You just count backwards from the end of the issue.

21-22: So clearly this conversation was going to be completely different. Kind of miss the "you're already in jail" line. That was pretty good. Otherwise, I think what's in the comic is more effective. And you can't go wrong ending an issue on a big drawing of a head!

FUN FACT: Sometimes ideas for other books come to me while I'm working on a different book. So if you're wondering what "Dupli-Kate. Multi-Paul" is... well, this was the moment where I realized that it would be cool if the INVINCIBLE character Dupli-Kate had a brother, and if she did, the brother's name could be Multi-Paul. Like Duplicate and Multiple... get it? Get it?! INVINCIBLE is awesome and you should all be reading that, too... AND watching the series on Amazon Prime!

ISSUE 20

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

~~CAP 30~~ TWD (20)

~~"HE'S STANDING RIGHT BEHIND ME - SHIT HE'S~~

PRISON LIFE IN GENERAL MAYBE MORE IN PRISON!

(1) GLENN IN KILLING ZOMBIES. SPLASH ZOMBIES IN FRONT OF CLOTHES - [illegible] PRISON.

(2) MORE ZOMBIES. SHOW PRISON

(3) GLENN KILLS ZOMBIE - "KICK ASS-! IT WORKS." 00 [illegible] 7:00

(4) SEES MAGGIE-- CAN WE TALK. ANDREA'S MAKING A GO [illegible] MORE [illegible]

(5) MEETING W/ ANDREA IN CAFETERIA. [illegible]

(6) SPEECH MAKING [illegible]

(7) AFTER MEETING. RICK + [illegible] ALK? [illegible] (BLOOD SPATTER)

(8) [illegible] IN ON LOR. [illegible]

(9) MORE W/ LORI + CARL?

(10) TYREESE + CAROL TALK TO [illegible]

(11) MORE W/ MICHONNE.

(12) [illegible] + ANDREA TALKING. [illegible]

AXEL + HERSHEL -- FARMING -- TALKING APOLOGIZE ABOUT THOMAS.

(13) OTHER - PATRICIA TALKING -- "NO OH [illegible] TO THE [illegible] THEM?"

(14)

ALLEN.. I'LL COME TOO [illegible] THAT?

(15)

(16) LIBRARY SCARE.

(17)

(18)

(19) [illegible] - IT'S A [illegible].

THE GREGG

Okay... right off the bat, I'm going to acknowledge that this is the issue where Otis uses the N-word. It's not something I've used very often in my work. It definitely appears more in the early seasons of the TV show than it ever does in this comic. But it's here. When I read through the issue, I cringed when I read it... but I think that cringe is important.

I know there is an effort in some circles to scrub the word from fiction and I have to admit I'm against that. We need to remember how this word was used if we are to ever have any hope of moving forward. I'm not naive enough to think I'll live to see a post-racism world, but I have to hope it's at least possible. People need to remember people like Otis, who they were, how they lived, how casual their racism was, just under the surface. You could know someone like Otis for a long time and never realize the racism was there. I'm willing to bet a lot of people reading this know people like Otis. Anyway... people suck, let's move on.

Shifting gears to talk about the issue, from time to time I'd think, "Sure hasn't been any zombie action in a while" or "We should really feature some zombies so people remember this is a zombie book" and that's how we end up with scenes like the opening sequence of this issue. It was clearly something that I expanded after the plot was done. That's how right off the bat we move page 3 to page 5.

Andrea has quite a long speech about being a seamstress in the prison and making clothes out of jumpsuits and sheets, etc. I'd always wanted this book to slowly progress to a *Mad Max*-like place, where people make their own clothes and things get visually weirder as it goes. This conversation was meant to be the start to that. Andrea was going to make weird homemade clothing for everyone. Then I realized the population had gone from so many to so few that they would realistically never run out of clothing. It's not like clothing goes bad. I mean... I have at least one shirt that's nearly 30 years old... it still works. So they kind of just kept wearing regular clothes... for the most part.

Props to Charlie for the cool, moody sequence in the prison, lots of shadows, really cool panel framing. He's a real master at light and shadow so it's cool seeing his skills on display here.

Good job to young Kirkman for the transition from Allen being bit (a death sentence) and Dale saying, "This must be our lucky day." That's a pretty cool end to an issue that didn't resort to your typical ham-fisted cliffhanger.

"He's standing right behind me, isn't he?" which is crossed out, was going to be one of those cliche scenes that I'm sure I've done in other books before and since, where someone is saying something bad about a character and then they're standing behind them and have heard the whole thing. I believe I was going to do it with Axel in this issue, to show people still don't trust him. I believe I changed it to the scene where Axel talks to Hershel instead.

Page notes:

1: "Glenn killing zombies" was quickly changed to "Splash of zombies in front of prison." It kind of reads like "Zombies in front of clothes" but that's just the stuff written at the top snaking down. I usually cross things out or mark where that's happening by drawing a line to divide the words, but I guess I was in a bit of a rush.

4: That stray "GO" is as mysterious to me as it is to you! What's that doing there?!

6: Those jackets and shorts were SOOOO important.

7: This scene just got cut. Didn't need Rick talking to Tyreese at this point.

8-9: Does this scene exist more or less just to justify the dramatic cover I'd already had drawn? Maybe. Then there was going to be more to this scene that involved Carl? I barely followed this plot at all!

14: This scene got moved up all the way to page 9.

22: "Splash – it's a generator." Heh.

OKAY... so what the heck, was Allen's leg bite even planned in this plot? Did I just write that into the script on a whim? To be honest... I don't fully remember. I'm not re-reading these old letters columns we're sometimes reprinting and it's possible I talk about it there. But looking at the covers for the following issues, I'm pretty sure it was not planned. I think I had that big gap in the plot you see at the bottom there and I thought, "A generator isn't a big enough cliffhanger... let's add to it" and had Allen get bitten. Fun times.

Oh, and lastly "Use Gregg." From time to time, I'd think of names I hadn't really used and make a note to use them later. I don't think I ever got around to using Gregg (two Gs) in the book at all. I do not count Gregory.

I could lie and say this was me making a note that if a TV show ever got made to use Greg Nicotero and KNB for make-up effects, but that stroke of genius was already baked in by Frank Darabont when he came on board.

ISSUE 21
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

TWD (21)

(1) CONT FROM 20. THROUGH DALE HEAR SCREAMS

(2)

(3)

(4) CARRY HIM OUT [illegible]

(5)

(6) RICK CHOPS LEG

(7) ALLEN'S LOSING A LOT OF BLOOD! TIE OFF MY LEG!

(8) HERSHELE- WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?! DO THIS!

(9) DEALING W/ LEG/ALLEN, LET'S GET [illegible] INSIDE.

(10) SCENE W/ EARL + SOPHIA FOR COVER.

(11) THEY SEE RICK + OTHERS CARRYING ALLEN.

(12) OTIS DOING SOMETHING -- OR SOMEONE ELSE...

(13) [illegible]/CAROL [illegible] ARRIVED. TALKS.

(14) [illegible]

(15) [illegible] + MICHONNE

(16) CAROL SEES.

(17) ANDREA + ALLEN: "TAKE CARE OF "OUR" KIDS.

(18) ALLEN TALKING TO ANDREA → CONT

(19) GLENN + MAGGIE [illegible]

(20) "[illegible] FINE."

(21) [illegible] "WHO ARE YOU TALKIN' TO?"
MICHONNE "WHAT?"

(22) SPEAKS ANDREA [illegible] "[illegible]"

(1) OTIS IS BAD

(2) [illegible]

TPB TITLE WORDS 'SAVIOR' AND ~~ADORE~~ "THOSE WE [illegible]

(5) [illegible] + SOPHIA [illegible]

Okay, this cover definitely indicates to me that the Allen leg bite was definitely something that came up in the writing and was NOT planned. I have a pretty good memory, but from time to time there will definitely be some details that are hazy to me. I'm really sorry about that.

This section was originally meant to be a hardcover full of this stuff. Can you believe this book was SOOO popular I thought that was a good idea? THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR hardcover would have come out around a decade ago, if it had come out as scheduled. I do regret not getting it out when we originally meant to, because this series was more fresh on my mind. All that said, doing this every couple weeks, and having this be a feature in this deluxe presentation of the series, means these entries are longer and more detailed than they probably would have been had they just ben entries in a hardcover all done at once. Fun times!

Anyway, another packed issue. Lots of stuff just jammed. Reading these is really making me want to do a new series where I try to jam in as much stuff as I used to, play with pacing, etc. All that said, the Michonne scene does seem a little out of place for me these days. I mean, sheesh... there's a time and a place, lady!

At the bottom of this page, you'll see "TPB title words 'Savior' and 'Adore.'" Then, 'Those We Adore'" which eventually became the title for the volume... *wait* I looked it up... apparently, I never used "Those We Adore" for a TPB title... that's super weird. I could have sworn we did. I even just spent five minutes Googling the volume titles to double-check. Weird. Mandela Effect? Seems like it. Anyway... I was always trying to think of cool words for TPB titles. You'll see that again from time to time on future plots.

Last thing before page notes. The 1-5 notes at the bottom of the page were probably written first and were just scenes I knew I wanted to get in the book. The TPB title thing came first and these notes were written around that. I would do the numbers down the side first, and then sometimes I'd use that space at the bottom (or sometimes top right) to jot things down to make sure I didn't forget. But you all know this by now, right? Am I repeating myself in these? PAGE NOTES!

PAGE NOTES:

1-6: Clearly, I knew how this sequence would break down pretty clearly. I didn't need to spend the time in the plot writing it all down.

7-9: MAN, this one really went by the numbers pretty much exactly. FUN FACT: I really do hate researching things, but I swear I do it as often as I can. Hershel cutting Axel's hair off and saying, "It's not horsehair--but it'll do" is referencing amputations from the Civil War where they would use horsehair to tie off the arteries. I wanted to research how successful amputations were done in the distant past because in the zombie apocalypse we'd have to resort back to those primitive methods.

10: "Scene w/Carl & Sophia FOR COVER." Man, those were the days. I've talked about this before, all these covers were dictated to Tony as vague notions of what would be in the issue. "Uh... Carl and Sophia holding hands, looking at zombies beyond the fence." That's a cool, striking, memorable cover and it gives me room to do almost ANYTHING in the issue. It's actually quite fun doing a book this way. Having a solid rough idea for where a series goes and then sitting down, looking at a cover, and then writing a story to fit. It's more a young man's game, but it was fun. So yeah, "for cover" means I was making sure the cover scene was in the issue.

12: Nice one, Robert... real... vague there, buddy.

14-18: Lots of juggling going on here. Pages 17 and 18 got turned into a quick dialogue scene on page 15. I mean... that REALLY didn't need to be two pages.

19 and 20: Was it particularly graceful to go from this Tyreese/Michonne scene to this Glenn/Maggie scene? Maybe not. Do we need back-to-back sex scenes? Eh... it worked.

21 and 22: And again, packed issue. We introduce Michonne being a little crazy at the end of this issue, just SO MUCH stuff in the last half of this issue. And man... Charlie just killed it again on this issue. And man, McCaig sure does make this issue sing. I'll end this entry of The Cutting Room Floor with one last criticism of myself. "Hey! Young punk Robert Kirkman! Andrea's line 'Who are you talking to?' when Charlie drew such a CLEARLY empty cell that Michonne is in, is ENOUGH! Adding 'There's nobody there.' is REDUNDANT! Sheesh! Way to fall in love with your own words, kiddo."

Please continue to enjoy THE WALKING DEAD DELUXE, which is a fantastic series that I am very proud of. Truly.

ISSUE 22
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

TWD (22)

(1) [illegible] "I WASN'T [illegible]
(2) TYREESE + ~~[illegible]~~ CAROL.
(3) TYREESE + CAROL.
(4) GLENN + MAGGIE SNEAK BACK TO CELL.
(5) HERSHELL WAITING ON THEM, ALLEN.
(6) RICK -- NE[illegible] NOTHING. ONE REMOVES [illegible]. LORI'S STILL ASLEEP, BABY - TIRED ALL THE TIME.
(7) SHOW RICKS HAND.
(8) CAFETERIA MEETING. GENERATOR, BOOKS, ARMORY, - NO MEETING - JUST TALKING.
(9) LEAVING. TALK TO GLENN. CLEANING ZOMBIES OFF FENCE. HEAT = MORE SMELL.
(10) ANDREA + DALE BONDING W/ BEN + BILLY. ANDREA MADE THIS BANDANA.
(11) TYREESE + ANDREA ~~FIGHTING~~. YOURE FATHER IS GOING TO BE FINE. "HE WANTS TO BE W/ MOMMY."
(12) RICK + TYREESE. LEAVE TO GO BACK TO FENCE. ANDREA CRYING. TYREESE APOLOGIZING.
(13) HERSHEL + AXEL WORK AROUND.
(14) GLENN + BILLY CLEAN OFF FENCE.
(15) LORI + CAROL W/ KIDS WATCHING THEM.
(16) RICK + TYREESE TALKING.
(17) SEE GLENN ASK FOR HELP.
(18) MORE TALKING.
(19) BE[illegible] HANGED.
(20) EVERYONE [illegible].
(21) [illegible]
(22) [illegible] RICK.

Well, my goal was ALWAYS to get to a point where the series was squarely focused on the humans and the zombies barely needed to appear. Emphasis on "needed," I never wanted the book to be boring! But man, by issue 22 I was already doing issues that were straight up soap opera stories. NICE!

Is it weird how these entries are becoming me just rereading my old work and going, "I did what? Wow. Neat!" I mean, I promise I re-read this series multiple times while I was writing it. I used to be very well versed in this world. The truth is, after I ended the series (already over TWO YEARS ago, sheesh.) I really kind of freed my brain of all this info. Keeping everything together, for so long, all the twists and turns and how it affected the surviving characters was really quite taxing. It was quite a relief to cap it off and free the vast portion of my mind that was devoted to THE WALKING DEAD for all those years.

But that's led to me forgetting a lot over the last two years.

Which is kind of cool because it's making things somewhat fresh as I review these issues. I mean, trust me, I remember ALL the broad strokes, but the details, the details are sometimes quite new.

You'll see on my plot to the left that I drew a silly little head. No point to that. It means I got distracted while plotting, or someone called me while I was plotting. I sometimes would doodle things like that to see if I could still draw at all. You'll see more of that as we go on.

Speaking of drawings, look in the bottom right, that's my cover layout for issue 26. Writing issue 22, while laying out the cover for 26, that's how far ahead those covers had to be done. I didn't lay out many covers, but from time to time I did.

And WHOA, this issue changed a bunch from the plot. Let's dive right in.

PAGE NOTES:

1-5: Pretty much by the book here. I think I had a pretty good idea of what I wanted out of this issue (or I thought I did), and I plotted it in a hurry, which is probably why it changed so much in the scripting stage. I knew what "Tyreese and Carol" would be on pages 2 & 3, and "Hershel, waiting on them, Allen" was shorthand for, "Hershel was going to scold them about Allen."

6-7: This was originally going to be in Rick's cell, with Lori waking up instead of Andrea.

8: No cafeteria meeting. By this point, I'd decided to add in the Carol attempts suicide plot. So I had to start building it here.

9: "Andrea made this bandana." The whole Andrea making clothes plot really just fell out fast.

10: This scene changed to the one with Otis and moved.

11: My dumb brain, after writing Andrea for Andrea on page 10 is clearly writing Andrea for Carol one mere page later. But this was supposed to be an argument about their break-up. In the end... I didn't feel like I needed it.

12: This scene was cut. A lot of this made room for the Lori/Michonne scene, which was nice.

13: This stayed, but got moved up, AND expanded into some character moment for Axel.

14: Boy... there was going to be SO MUCH fence cleaning in this issue. Sheesh. Glad that got changed.

15-16: So, all this was cut for the scene where Rick and Lori find Carol after cutting her wrists. All you TV show fans are probably shocked by how different comic book Carol is to TV show Carol. This has been discussed at length, I won't waste a bunch of time here talking about the TV show. This Carol plot was more or less given to Beth in season 2 of the show. Things really got jumbled around at times on the show.

What happened was this issue was building to a big fight between Rick and Tyreese. I knew they'd be fighting over Tyreese's treatment of Carol, and at a certain point, it just didn't seem like enough to bring them to blows. So poor Carol had to do something extreme. Which is a perfect example of a male writer using tragic events with a female character to build up the male character's plot. Something to be mindful of if you're a male writer out there.

In my defense, there are PLENTY of times over the course of this series where horrible things happen to male characters to further the female character's plots, so I'm an equal opportunity exploitive writer. I mean really... horrible stuff happened to literally every character in this series. Why did you guys like this book so much? Oh... that's what makes good drama... huh.

20: Clearly, I opted for something more solitary for the Rick/Tyreese fight.

22: How's THAT for a cliffhanger? Tyreese punches Rick! More on this splash page ending next issue. Just you wait!

ISSUE 23
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

1 [illegible]

2 TYREESE PUNCHING [illegible]

3 TYREESE CONT EIGHT "YOU HAVE COME TO"

4 MORE EIGHT

5 ENOUGH?

6 SPLASH". ARE YOU THROUGH?

7

8

9 WHAT ABOUT DEXTER?

10 YOU WANTED TO CUT OFF HIS LEG -- I SAW IT IN YOUR EYES.

11 HOW DARE YOU?! TACKLE AGAINST GUARDRAIL.

12 MORE FIGHT. RICK W/ UPPER HAND.

13 TYREESE FLINGS HIM OVER THE SIDE OF THE SECOND FLOOR.

14 WIDE -- ALL RICK IN FG TYREESE DOWN STAIRS IN PANEL 3 [illegible] ROLLS IN

15 RICK KICKS TYREESE IN THE HEAD.

16 MORE FIGHT. LORI SHOWS UP -- DALE. OTIS, PATRICIA

17 RICK TRYS TO STAND -- CANT. FALLS OVER.

18 MORE FIGHT TYREESE ATTACKS.

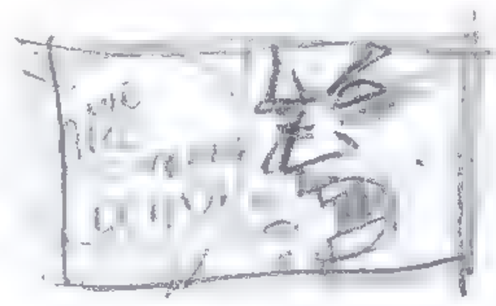
19 3 PANELS ① STOP! ② ALLEN IS DEAD! ③ ALLEN IS DEAD.

20 TYREESE AND RICK FROZEN. RICK STANDS UP "I'LL SHOOT HIM [illegible] I KNOW I DID." (HOW?)

21 WIDE SHOTS OF TYREESE BLAM! FROM CELL LORI GIVES HIM DIRTY LOOK?

22 CLE[illegible] W/GUN STANDS OVER ALLEN. HERSHEL + MICHONNE CHECK IN. CAROL'S OKAY NOT DEEP CUTS. MICHONNE WELDED PATCH [illegible] UP.

23 RICK FALLS OVER "RICK!"



Okay, first off, I want to point out one of the coolest things we ever did in this series. The FIRST page of this issue and the LAST page of the previous issue forms a two-page spread. How cool is that?

I feel like I've been pretty upfront about my love for Erik Larsen's *Savage Dragon*. It's my favorite comic of all time. And much like Larsen borrows liberally from Jack Kirby and other creators from his youth... I do the same. This trick of breaking a spread across two issues was done by him in *Savage Dragon* №30 and №31. It's such a cool gag, I don't know why either of us haven't done it again since.

This series was always written with trade paperbacks in mind. That's why the issues flow seamlessly into the next. The idea is that when collected, it should seem like a graphic novel that was always intended to be read that way (because that's the format most people will read it in). That said, I think the strength of this series is due in part to the effort to make each individual issue have some big moment to stand alone on, so you know... trying for the best of both worlds.

This issue is more or less a big fight between Rick and Tyreese, which was a lot of fun, and it was great getting to let Charlie just cut loose and draw page after page of knuckle bleeding action, while in typical comic book fashion have the two characters berating each other the whole time.

This issue could be subtitled, "the one where it establishes these two guys are maniacs." But that would probably apply to most issues of this series.

DRAWING ALERT! Look at the bottom of this page for the genesis of the big moment (SPOILERS) coming up next issue. I had the idea for that two-page spread while plotting this issue and decided to scribble it down in picture form rather than write it out.

FUN FACT: I was actually in San Diego, at Comic-Con, having lunch with Eric Stephenson and John Layman when I came up with the idea for the "We are the Walking Dead" scene. It just kind of came to me during a lull in conversation during the end of the lunch.

Okay... let's do some Page Notes:

1: (Cont...) That's my shorthand for "the other half of the spread".

2-7: I didn't bother plotting much here. I knew what was happening.

8-11: More or less just plotting out what key bits of dialogue are said on these pages.

12: Whoa! Look at that! Originally, Tyreese was going to purposefully fling Rick over the railing! That was quite the change. In the process of scripting the issue, I realized it would be a bit too much if Tyreese lost his cool to the point that he basically tried to kill Rick. And it would kind of also win the argument for Rick, that it was Tyreese who was unstable and dangerous... and that's never really how I saw Tyreese as a character.

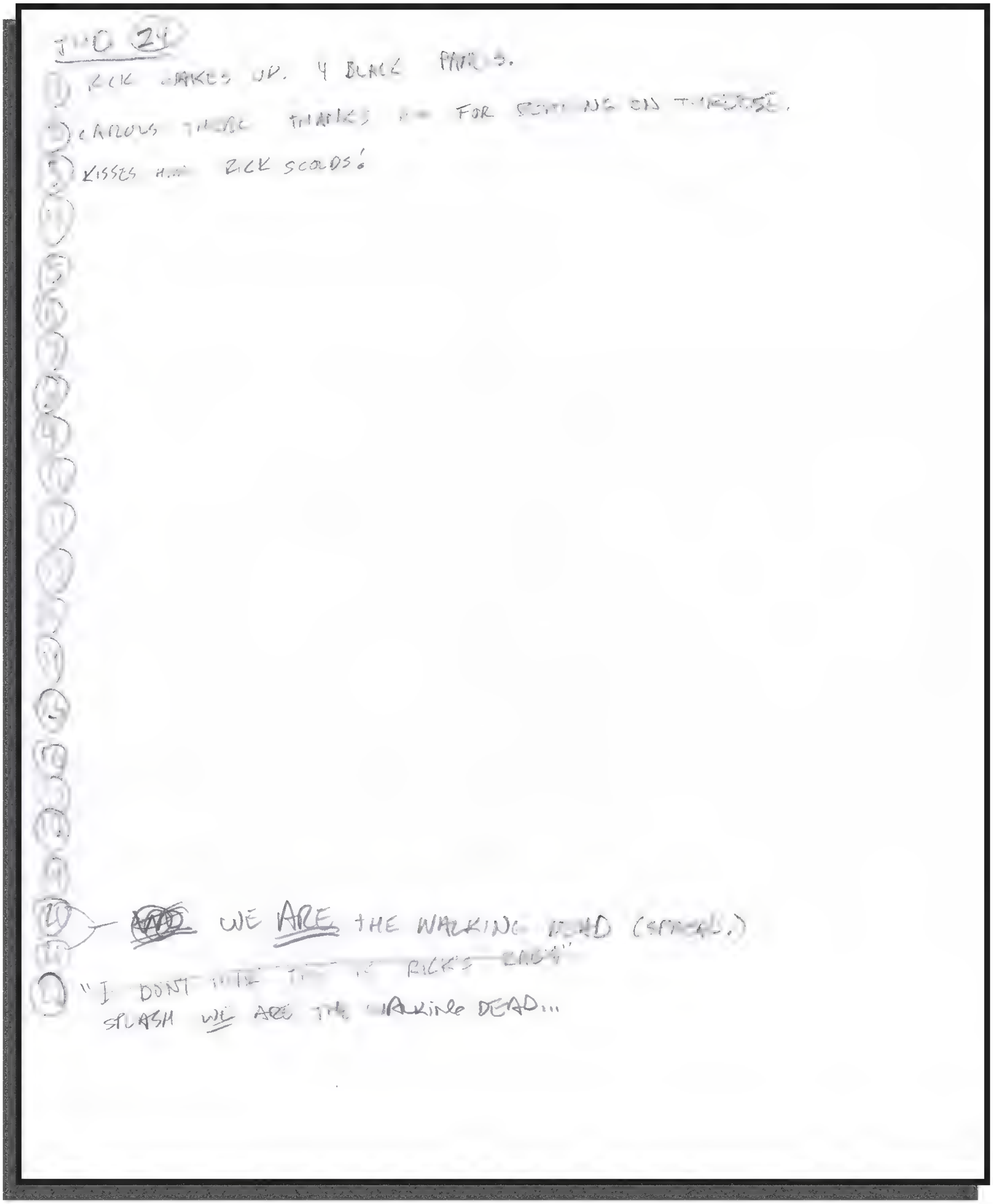
13: MORE FUN FACT: This scene is somewhat based on real life. As a teenager, I helped my dad re-shingle our roof. While up there working, we had tar paper laid down to put the shingles over, and I stepped on a part that was overlapping the roof, thinking there was more roof under the paper. There wasn't, and I fell to the ground. Thankfully, we lived in a one-story house and other than some stitches, I was completely fine. BUT immediately after I fell, we're talking 3 seconds here, my dad just JUMPED off the roof like a superhero. He landed right next to me and was checking to make sure I was okay. So that's what inspired Tyreese jumping down to make sure Rick is okay on this page. My dad didn't hurt his foot, though. I had to make the scene in the comic more believable.

15: Decided on fewer people being in the scene when it came to scripting.

18: Wisely decided to go for the splash page here. For maximum impact. Way more effective than a three-panel page and it has the added benefit of looking like the final splash page of an issue, so if you're going through the trade trying to figure out where issues begin and end--it's HARD!

19-22: From here on, everything more or less plays out as scripted. Kind of funny that I was trying to make Rick blacking out a big cliffhanger moment when he's already blacked out twice from the fight, and it's crazy he was even able to stand at the end of the issue. Thankfully, it worked!

ISSUE 24
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman



Ooooh, look. It's the big "We are the Walking Dead" issue... man... this is a pretty pivotal issue in the series so the plot for it must be really dense and complicated, right? Well... most definitely not right. I mean, look over there to the left... it's almost a completely blank page. Why did I write anything down at all?

This issue was quite different than the others in that, well... almost nothing happens. There would be a few issues in this series that are like this and if you're a detractor of the series, you might say most of them are issues where not much happens. I couldn't disagree with those people more, but I am obviously biased.

I knew this issue ended with the big moment. I knew the big moment was a two-page spread, followed by a splash page. I knew this issue would be 22 pages, and those three pages would be 20-22.

So that much was all locked in.

I also knew that this big moment at the end of the issue was the climax of a very long speech. But how many pages was that speech going to take up? I didn't know.

I usually start from page 1 and maybe jump around a LITTLE when I plot, but for the most part I move chronologically down the page. But with this big speech taking up... five pages? Eight pages? Ten? I really couldn't do things like I always did.

So, I just wrote out the speech. I didn't bother to take any time figuring out how long it would be or what pages it would fall on. I just wrote out all the dialogue and then went back and moved it into panels and into pages. Once I did that, I figured out that the speech would start on page 14 and run for the final nine pages of the book.

From there... who was listening to the speech? Well... they're all outside planting. Good. They're all where they need to be.

I knew Dale had to talk to Rick about the new status quo, and we opened with the awkward Carol and Rick scene... and well... the issue was pretty much done... and required next-to-no written plot. A real bummer if I ever decided to run them all as a back-up feature in a color reprint of the series. But as our classic letters columns reveal, I had no plans of ever doing that. I mean... I was a sellout, but THAT much of a sellout? Bah! Never!

So now let's talk about that new status quo. New council. Rick, Tyreese, Hershel, and Dale. No women. I got a lot of flak at the time for having Dale say, "I think they just want to be protected." Is that a misogynistic and dismissive line? Sure. But the things characters say are not thoughts endorsed by the writers who write them, they're stuff we make characters say. And Dale is an old white guy, so that tracks.

At the time, I thought: Lori was pregnant and dealing with a lot. Andrea and Maggie were young. Michonne was new and not trusted. Patricia and Carol were proven to be unstable at best. There wasn't a clear female candidate to be on the council. Seemed logical at the time, but then I spent THREE PAGES in the comic trying to justify that decision and man... that really makes things WEIRD, right? Like when Michael Bay had that 19-year-old dating a 17-year-old in that *Transformers* movie, and there's a whole scene where the guy explains how it's okay because he has some government issued card that has approved the relationship. (Is that a thing? Don't answer that.)

Michael Bay should have made that girl 19 and I should have put Lori in the council. The decision I made at the time kind of proved I wasn't writing the best female characters, and I'm glad to say I eventually got my act together and Andrea, Maggie, and Michonne turned out to be female characters I'm pretty proud of. I wish I could take credit for TV Carol on the show, but that credit goes to Melissa McBride and a talented team of writers led by Scott Gimple and Angela Kang.

PAGE NOTES: (Really? Why bother?)

22: HERE'S WHY! If you look at that crossed out section, you can see... man... this issue was originally not supposed to end this way, was it? No. It was not. The original big ending to the Volume 4 TPB, the Volume 2 HC, and the Volume 1 Deluxe HC (issue №24 is the end point of all those collections) was going to be Lori revealing to someone that the baby definitely was NOT Rick's. This passage would have been written on this piece of paper possibly months before I sat down to write this issue. From time to time, if I had a big moment planned for the future, I'd go ahead and jot it down and have it ready for when I finally got to that issue. And often times... I'd change it then. This was one of those times!

Man... I can't believe I wrote THIS MUCH commentary for such a blank page of plots.

ISSUE 25

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD 25

TALK ABOUT MORGAN + DAVID? GETS NAME WRONG.
CARL IS PIED PIPER
RICK WORRIES ABOUT THEM.

1. SEARCHING PRISON, SPLASH RICK?
2. [illegible]
3. HEAR SOMETHING.
4. [illegible]
5. ANDREW [illegible]
6. GLENN LOOK [illegible] ARMY.
7. INSPECT ROOM [illegible] TALK ABOUT [illegible]
8. BOOKS. ANDREA [illegible] — LORI [illegible].
9. [illegible] TALK ABOUT LORI'S PREGNANCY.
10. [illegible]
11. WHERE WE GOING? WHERE DO YOU THINK?
12. SHOW RICK & MICHONNE'S GRAVE. I'M GLAD THE BURIED YOU...
13. PIED PIPER?
14. CARL SAYING [illegible] WORRIED? [illegible]
15. WEARING [illegible]
16. [illegible] EARL.
17. [illegible]
18. DROP GAS [illegible]
19. FIGHT
20. GET [illegible]
21. [illegible] RICK AND LORI [illegible] END OF [illegible].
22. "I'M BEING!" (LORI)

So much to talk about this issue. So much to reveal! I think the biggest thing to reveal is about the covers... and it's honestly something I don't think anyone outside myself really knows. If you look at the covers for issues №25-30 of this series, it's SIX straight covers of riot gear suits. There's not one single character from the book who is actually on these covers.

There was a time where I'd considered making issue №25 essentially an issue №1, that introduced a whole new cast of characters. I'd also considered having the characters find riot gear suits in the prison so the covers would still work if I went that way. So, I was hedging my bets.

The plan would be to spend time with a new group of people, see how they survived and really get to know them, and then eventually they would run into Rick Grimes and crew and both groups would merge into the full cast of the book. I knew Woodbury was coming, and The Governor... this would have just been a detour in my plans.

In the end... I didn't do it. But I seriously considered it the whole time I was writing issues №22-24, while all these covers were being drawn for solicitation.

Celebrity name drop time. Around when these issues were being written, I was charged with taking over *Ultimate X-Men* for Marvel. Brian K. Vaughan was ending his run and they needed someone to write a small run of issues before Bryan Singer (yes, he had been announced to be taking over the book for a while) finally got around to doing his run. At the time, Damon Lindelof was writing *Ultimate Wolverine vs Hulk* and being a stickler for continuity, I wanted to make sure the Wolverine I was writing in X-Men synced up to his correctly. (Boy, Marvel sure was crazy about getting Hollywood people to write comics back then.)

Damon is just the nicest guy and agreed to hop on the phone with this lowly comic writer from Kentucky. Being a huge fan of *Lost,* I was very excited, and I'm not too proud to admit I had a bit of trouble keeping my calm during the call.

Now, if you look at the plot on the left-hand side of the page, you'll see the ending to this issue, originally, was way different and... not as good.

While on the phone talking Wolverine and X-Men with Damon, he mentioned that he was enjoying THE WALKING DEAD (back then you didn't have to specify comic or TV show [or video game, board game, other TV show, mobile game or other OTHER TV show]) and made a suggestion for the book. He said, "Wouldn't it be cool if the characters just saw a helicopter flying overhead?" I immediately thought to myself, "Well, that's a way better ending to issue №25", and told Damon I really liked that idea and would he mind if I used it? He very graciously gave me his blessing.

You'll note that at the end of the issue Rick and Glenn SEE a helicopter, but the reader doesn't. That's because I hadn't yet decided what type of helicopter they were seeing or where it was going, where it came from or how it would affect the story.

For me, the best way to write comics is to have a solid road map planned that you can always use in a pinch. The more far-reaching the plans, the better. But NEVER EVER allow those plans to keep you from doing something spontaneous that pops into your head in the moment. That's where the real fun of writing is.

PAGE NOTES:

1-8: Pretty much exactly what ended up in the script.

9: All this pregnancy talk and Carol being worried for Lori was setting up the lamer ending we didn't go with. Scene still works, but would have been more important if the ending hadn't changed.

10: You'll see more of this as I got more confident with my writing as I got older. "Whatever" as in "I'll figure this out later." What did I put here? More yakking with Rick, Tyreese, and Dale setting up the conflict of the issue. The gas run.

13-14: Originally, Carl was going to have a big part in luring the zombies from the gate. I do miss the "bite my butt!" line. I don't know that I ever used it in the book. For some reason, I decided to make Lori a buzz kill yet again and deem this action unsafe for Carl.

15-20: Originally this was to be a more frantic, action-packed sequence where things would go wrong, and they'd have to rush back to the gate in a panic. Obviously, this all changed.

21-22: The original ending. A quiet moment with Rick and Lori when disaster strikes, the baby is in danger! Where was this going? As I recall, it was going to lead to Lori being bed-ridden for the rest of the pregnancy... which means this would have been a pretty lame cliffhanger with no real consequences that only seemed dire until you read the following issue. Which I HAVE done from time to time, but I have always tried to avoid it. Hence when Damon made his suggestion... I jumped at it! Thanks again, Damon!!

ISSUE 26

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD 26

(1) ZOMBIE ATTACK!

(2) ZOMBIE KILL [illegible]

(3) TALK-- [illegible]

(4) IS IT LANDING? NO - CRASHING!

(5) TYREESE - [illegible] DID YOU [illegible] THAT? WHAT? HELICOPTER NO SHIT WHERE?

(6) GO TO GATE [illegible] CHONPE - [illegible]

(7) LORI & CAROL [illegible]

(8)

(9)

(10) ROAD GOES ONE [illegible]

(11)

(12) [illegible]

(13) DALE + RICKS TALK TO [illegible]

(14) WALKING [illegible]

(15)

(16)

(17) CAROL [illegible]

(18) CAROL PROPOSES. LORI STUNNED. ← LAST PANEL.

(19) ARRIVE @ CRASH SITE

(20)

(21) SOMEBODY TOOK [illegible], SOMEBODY WAS WAS [illegible]

NEXT ISS [illegible] RICK! [illegible]

TPB NAMES

(5) THE BEST DEFENSE

(6) ~~[illegible]~~ MADE TO SUFFER

(7) THOSE WE ADORE

(8) THIS SORROWFUL LIFE

(9)

First off, we'll cover the TPB titles in the top right. The rule for TPB titles was that they needed to be three words and they needed to sound pretentious. Or really... they needed to seem pretentious to ME. Which is not a high bar, I suppose. Clearly, not all of these were used, and they weren't used in this order. I think I just wrote them out as I thought of them really quickly. So it's not like the events of Volume 8: *Made To Suffer* were originally planned to happen in Volume 6. It's just that I thought it might work for Volume 6 when I came up with it.

I still can't believe I never used *Those We Adore*. Man... that would have been a good one.

Carol suggests a new polyamorous relationship for her, Rick, and Lori in this issue. Looking back, I think it's hilarious how I turned this into a mini cliffhanger. Still, I guess I'm feeling the need to acknowledge that I was using the suggestion to show how Carol was sort of spinning out in the zombie apocalypse, becoming more desperate for companionship, and suggesting things she might not otherwise. But it was never meant to ridicule the lifestyle or poke fun at it. I hope that's clear, but you never know.

No real big revelations this issue. Sorry, they can't all be like last issue. I suppose the big one to point out is small at the very bottom of the page. "Noah - President of Town." Look at that... proto-Governor right there! He was originally named Noah? What's up with me and biblical names? So weird. Anyway, I clearly hadn't settled on "The Governor" yet, even though he was set to debut in the very next issue.

Frankly, I've never really put a lot of weight to character names. Sometimes I'll throw in a placeholder name while I'm writing a script and then change it when I do a lettering pass after the art is done. Sometimes I just keep what was meant to be a temp name because I've gotten used to it by that point. When I started out, I'd just randomly pull names from my past. "Oh, Glenn, that's a cool name." The first Glenn I knew was a kid I played T-Ball with. Lori was actually a girl I knew in 2nd grade. You can't own a name! Right? Whatever. After a while I sort of ran out of names from my childhood and started using my spam box in my email. So many random names to use! That was helpful.

Anyway, names. I'm pretty lazy.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Was going to start with a zombie attack. Decided to give us another page of looking at a helicopter so the zombie attack would be on the page-turn with page 2. That makes things more surprising! Comics!

5: Tyreese dialogue here. I'm noticing that my shorthand dialogue in the plots is often better than the overwritten, beefed-up stuff I went with in the script. "Helicopter? No shit? Where?" is way better than: "A helicopter? No shit? Was it military?" In my defense, I believe I was trying to hit the military helicopter speculation pretty hard to make people think the military might be coming in to play a big role in the book. But still...

6 & 7: I clearly expanded this scene a bit from what was meant to be there. Basically, just had them talk more.

8 & 9: Blank pages! I knew what I was doing here and was just ready to get into it script-wise. I didn't feel the need to write "they're on the road" because I knew page 10 was a page-turn reveal that they couldn't follow the road anymore. So these two pages HAD to be them on the road.

11: Same with this. Page 12: Crash car. Okay... so for page 11 they must drive the car off-road.

14-17: "Walking through the woods" doesn't exactly cover what happens here but it was enough for me to get the idea. I do sometimes figure out whole scenes in the script stage. I'd wager at this point I was thinking, "Sure could use a zombie attack at this point and that page 16 page-turn is just sitting there begging for something."

18 & 19: Pretty straightforward.

22: Did I really need to add, "Whoever was in the helicopter"? I mean, I feel like it might have read better without it. And look, I misspelled "somebody" in this plot. Man... I'm a mess without spellcheck! Look, I'm writing fast! That's my defense.

At the bottom: Aside from the mention of ol' Noah down there, there's a bunch of dialogue suggested for next issue. I do this from time to time if I have a clear idea on what follows the cliffhanger at the end of an issue. But the funny thing is... I don't know why I don't just start the plot of the next issue. Sometimes I do, but often times it's at the end of the previous plot like this one. The best part is these are usually back-to-back, so all I need to do is flip the sheet of paper over! I don't know... I do weird stuff. I can't explain it.

Thanks for reading!!

ISSUE 27
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

TWD (27)

1. THE PEOPLE FROM THE HELICOPTER-- ALREADY BEING [illegible]

2. YOU WERE RIGHT NOT TO TRUST ME-- BUT I [illegible] YOUR STORY IS BULLSHIT.

3. [illegible] AROUND ALL THAT [illegible] ACT LIKE!

4. [illegible] THAT.

5. [illegible] OF [illegible]

6. [illegible] SOMEONE [illegible] COKE

7. [illegible] MORE.. OTHERWISE [illegible] TRYING TO [illegible] LIKE [illegible] PARANOID!

8. [illegible] ANIMAL [illegible] HERE. BUT YOU [illegible] CRACKED [illegible].

MICHONNE BITES GOV'S EAR OFF

LATER HE RAPES HER.

HEY! Look at this. This is going to be a two-part Cutting Room Floor for issue №27 because I had a false start.

Look over there at that half-written plot! I was originally planning on actually SHOWING the people from the helicopter. We were going to start the plot in Woodbury. Have some of the people in the helicopter being interrogated while others were getting cut up to be fed to the zombies in the gladiator pit.

There's even a backstory about them being holed up in a skyscraper in Atlanta. I never explicitly laid this out, but my little fan theory was always that the cast of *Dawn of The Dead* (Romero's original, of course) was in that helicopter. They left the news station and never made it to the mall. As I recall, I mention it being three men and two women... or maybe it was just the two who escape the mall at the END of the movie, y'know... that makes more sense. I think that was it. It was meant to be the helicopter that took off at the end of the movie and this was my take on their tragic fate.

Poor Peter and Francine.

Anyway, we were going to come into Woodbury, see how savage it was, maybe even meet the Governor ahead of our characters. The idea was that there would be a tension to the characters arriving there because we would KNOW they were heading into danger.

In the end... I threw all this out and decided instead to go for the surprise. Probably for the best.

So, I just started over, as we'll see as you turn the next page.

One thing of note, though... there's a lot of dialogue here that ended up in issue №28. Also, "Michonne bites Gov's ear off. Later he rapes her." I feel bad that comes off so cold and matter of fact in a plot like this. That's where that intense plot was born, controversial as it was. Cold hard text, just scrawled casually in the margin of a page.

Writing is weird.

Anyway, turn the page for Part 2. The REAL Cutting Room Floor for this issue.

ISSUE 27

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD (27)

(1) RICK WANTS TO FOLLOW THEM

(2) LORI + CAROL TALK. ANDREA + [illegible] DROP OFF KIDS.

(3) [illegible] ANDREA + D[illegible]

(4) [illegible]

(5) T[illegible] + DAXEL "LORI'S GONE [illegible]

(6) RICK + CREW AT ROAD

(7) FOLLOW TRACKS SEE [illegible] SHIT [illegible]

(8) CARL PUTTING [illegible] BIB -- HEAL.

(9) THREESE + AXEL, COMING IN TALKING [illegible] CAROL.

(10) CONT TALK,

(11) ~~PATRICIA + OTIS,~~ DALE + ANDREA?

(12) ZOMBIE TALK. MICHONNE

(13) MORE PAT + OTIS.

(14) [illegible] PAT + OTIS.

(15) MORE PAT + OTIS?

(16) RICK + [illegible] ARRIVE INTOWN. MICHONNE: "NO MATTER HOW NICE, ANYONE SEEMS.. DON'T TELL THEM [illegible] AFFORD ANYONE COMING AFTER US.

(17)

(18) [illegible] THINGS [illegible] ANGER

(19) (a) [illegible] TALK [illegible]

(20)

(21) "WE FEED THEM STRANGERS"

(1) HERSHEL + MAGGIE [illegible]

(2) [illegible]

(3) [illegible]

28 SPLASH -- CLIFF HANGER. WOMEN [illegible] GLENN... THEY NEVER REPORT [illegible]

"GLENN [illegible] -- SO [illegible]

Okay. The FINAL attempt to plot issue №27. This was the intro to the Governor. This issue is a big deal. I really should have done this for Michonne and other characters, but I wanted to see how his intro was written in script form. Here's that, see if you notice something different:

Panel one:

Tall panel: Okay, now we see The President... he's going to be pretty much the main villain for the next twenty issues or so. He's a bad ass, a crazy bad ass... his look is important. I'm thinking he should be a tall skinny white guy, like some kinda of thin, redneck, gun storeowner, he should have long black hair and a mustache, not a goatee, or a beard, a simple 70s mustache, nobody in the book has one of those. He should be wearing a fishing vest and cargo pants with combat boots. He should have a holster around his waist with a pistol in it. Maybe a thick sweater under the vest. Also, he should look really friendly, not evil at all.

BEHIND him we should see store fronts, but they're small three-story buildings, each with a few apartments in the top. This is where everyone in this town lives, in these apartments. The buildings are connected for the most part, forming a barrier. They've basically blocked off the area between the buildings with cars and makeshift fences to secure the area. They've got about six blocks or so marked off--all leading to a dirt track raceway that we'll see soon.

Also behind him are two big silent guards, just walking behind him. These guys should be emotionless, both holding AK-47s.

1 President: I can take it from here, Martinez. I'd like to escort our guests myself.

2 President: I need you at the wall, cleaning off all the biters they no doubt drug with them.

Okay, so the line of dialogue in the book where he says he almost went with president, but thought it sounded too silly... that was me talking. We almost DID go with President. Doesn't The Governor sound so much better? Thankfully, I'd already completely ditched his original name "Noah".

Anyway... looking at this plot, you have to notice that there is no real mention of him at all, Governor or President. The reason for that, is that I really had that whole final scene already blocked out pretty clearly in my head. So when that's the case, I tend to not waste too much time plotting it out on paper since it's already worked out.

Anyway, such humble beginnings for such an important character who would later become so many posters, action figures, lunch boxes and all kinds of weird things. What a fun ride it's been.

In the bottom right you'll see THREE numbered plot threads I wanted to squeeze in this issue. Those notes are often jotted down FIRST. So the idea is, "Hey Robert, make sure you get to these things." And well... I didn't get to one of them.

PAGE NOTES:

1. This boring plot was really enhanced in the script. I really dug how I had Glenn ramble on while Michonne and Rick just sprang into action.

4. That says, "MORE OF DALE", and yeah... it took me a second to figure that out, too. Notice the arrow down sign next to the plot for page 2. That means move Dale and Andrea arriving down a page, and I ended up moving it TWO pages. Had to make Lori's reaction as harsh as possible to facilitate the tragedy coming...

5: FUCK YOU, young Robert Kirkman! You just... ditched that "FIST CITY" line? Holy crap. I gotta use that somewhere now. This kid was spinning gold and just left it on the cutting room floor? What?! Seeing that line is probably the greatest thing I've discovered doing these things. Holy crap. What's that, young Robert Kirkman? That line isn't that great? My taste has just taken a turn for the worse in my old age? Really? Yeah... you're probably right. I'm still going to try to use it though. Pay attention and see if it pops up in INVINCIBLE on Amazon Prime!

I can't move on without also noting that this page is just... Axel and Tyreese talking about moving chairs back? And then doing it? I wasted a whole page on that?! That fist city line would have really made this page worthwhile. Huge misstep!

8: As I recall my dumb hand wrote "CARL" first instead of Lori, so I just wrote it out as it was and wrote "HEH" next to it because I thought a kid putting their mom to bed was funny. I wasn't yet a father by this point, but I was already making dad jokes. Is this process supposed to make me hate myself? Because, well... oh, who am I kidding... I've always hated myself!

9: Probably would have been nice to see Carol again, but instead I kept them outside.

11: First attempt to get this Patricia/Otis scene in this issue. A swing and a miss! And instead of Dale and Andrea, it's Hershel and Maggie!

12: Just wanted to say this is the first instance of the HERD concept, where zombies form in groups, being mentioned. Pretty cool. Always good to show your characters smart and cool. Michonne gets TWO moments to show how smart and cool she is this issue. I feel like these are the issues where she started getting really popular.

13-15: WHAT. THE. HECK? What was this scene going to be? There was going to be THREE pages of Otis, an obvious racist, talking to Patricia about how he "ain't no racist?" Well... I'm sure I had some kind of plan here, but it has been lost to the sands of time. In the hazy recesses of my brain, I seem to recall wanting to smooth over his relationship with Patricia after her big betrayal of the group. The idea being the more weight we give these characters, the more important and memorable their deaths will be. At a certain point though, I just sort of gave up on Otis and Patricia. Their deaths weren't all that memorable and they aren't fondly remembered characters in the series. I guess at a certain point, probably shortly after plotting this scene, I realized you have to pick your battles. There were a LOT of characters fighting for page-time by this point.

16: So proud of myself for dropping this dialogue and changing it to Michonne just interrupting Rick to lie to the Governor on their behalf. Having Rick just pick it up and continue the lie was a cool moment of showing characters being smart, and also great to see Rick following Michonne's lead. I feel like this is the issue where I was really starting to get a handle on her character and personality.

22: "Well, stranger. We feed them strangers." Clever line. Cool cliffhanger. Young RK makes up for losing the FIST CITY line.

And we end the plot with a few notes for next issue, just working out some of the plot turns so I wouldn't forget them when it came time to write that issue.

ISSUE 28

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD (28)

1. [illegible]
2. [illegible]
3. [illegible]
4. [illegible]
5. [illegible] SPEAKS
6. [illegible] SPEAKS?
7. [illegible]
8. [illegible]
9. [illegible]
10. [illegible]

WE DON'T [illegible]

11. [illegible] THREE [illegible]
12. [illegible]
13. [illegible]
14. [illegible]
15. [illegible]
16. [illegible]
17. [illegible]
18. [illegible]
19. [illegible]
20. [illegible]
21. [illegible]
22. [illegible]
23. [illegible]
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93. [illegible]
94. [illegible]
95. [illegible]
96. [illegible]
97. [illegible]
98. [illegible]
99. [illegible]
100. [illegible]

Well, this is definitely the most brutal, sadistic, and uncomfortable issue so far in the series. Reading over this issue, for the first time in a long while, it definitely made me uncomfortable. The Governor is really the most sadistic and evil character who was introduced in this series. Negan... well, he had a good side, he had charm. The Governor has no redeeming qualities whatsoever.

This is a very, very dark series. I haven't often gone into the fact that writing this series actually kind of took a toll on me. It would usually take me anywhere from three days to two weeks to write an issue, and that period of time was pretty strained in my life. Immersing yourself in this darkness and exploring the depraved depths of humanity can really get to you. Look at the other work I produced alongside THE WALKING DEAD. INVINCIBLE, THE ASTOUNDING WOLF-MAN, SUPER DINOSAUR, THE INFINITE, HAUNT, my various Marvel projects in the four years I worked there. There was definitely some darkness and brutality to some of those stories, but nothing like this series. Those various other projects provided me balance and made it possible that only a small portion of my month was spent exploring these dour events.

That's not to say I didn't enjoy working on THE WALKING DEAD, it was enormous fun most of the time. Being able to explore these very real aspects of humanity from afar, in a controlled environment, was a fun exercise at times and zombies are cool. But issues like this one... well, there's a reason these types of issues only happened every so often.

By this point, the series had firmly established the zombies as a threat and our characters had slowly gotten used to them, adapted to a world with them. They were still a threat, but I always knew they could never be the sole threat or even the main threat of this series. Our real, zombie-free world has a ton of threats, the most deadly, oftentimes, is the threat we pose to each other. So it was time to really show how deadly our characters fellow man can be.

Enter: The Governor. Did I go too far? Chopping off Rick's hand and setting up Michonne's rape in one issue? Maybe. Maybe it was too much. Maybe I was young, and the Governor's intro was just too intense. We certainly toned things down when it came time to adapt this storyline for the TV show.

All that said, I am proud of just how much of a gut punch this issue is. As a writer, your main goal is to make your audience feel things and this issue is definitely a roller coaster. So in that way it was a success. Even if after all these years, I personally find this arc hard to read.

I mean, if it was easy... what's the point?

The plot for this issue was pretty sparse. Another issue where it was all pretty solid in my head. I didn't want to waste too much time working it all out.

PAGE NOTES:

1: So I didn't use the survivors from the original *Dawn of the Dead* exactly. In the end, I changed it up a little from what was originally planned. I worried if I mentioned the shopping mall it would take people out of the story too much at a time when things were meant to be deadly serious.

6: Splash? Yeah. I thought I could cut the hand off here. Had to move it back a bit.

11: From this point on, the script matches this plot exactly. That doesn't happen too often.

14: Doctor Stevens. Yes, in issue №2 Rick is talking to his horse and mentions Doctor Stevens. They are NOT the same people, obviously. This is really just a goof up on my part. Like the later "everyone having the last name Monroe" bit that we'll get to when we reach the 60s. My family doctor when I was a child in Cynthiana, KY was Doctor Stephens. So I was just using the name and further tying the Grimes family to my home town. I, of course, forgot that when I got to these issues and used the name again. Only I changed the spelling to Stevens. Possibly as a nod to friend and collaborator in the BATTLE POPE days, Terry Stevens, who founded penciljack.com where I discovered Cory Walker, Matthew Roberts, E.J. Su, and a ton of other artists who I would do a lot of work with for years to come.

16-17: Sometimes you just need to do a cool two-page spread of zombies eating. Something I might have forgotten in the later issues of this series, when I was more or less bored with zombies... for better or worse! I mean, we still did cool stuff with zombies, but not nearly as often.

18: I don't recall if I had the fish tank idea for the following issue already and was teeing it up here, or if this moment inspired that. I think the latter is more likely.

20: What a cold matter of fact description of a page that is equal parts haunting and disgusting.

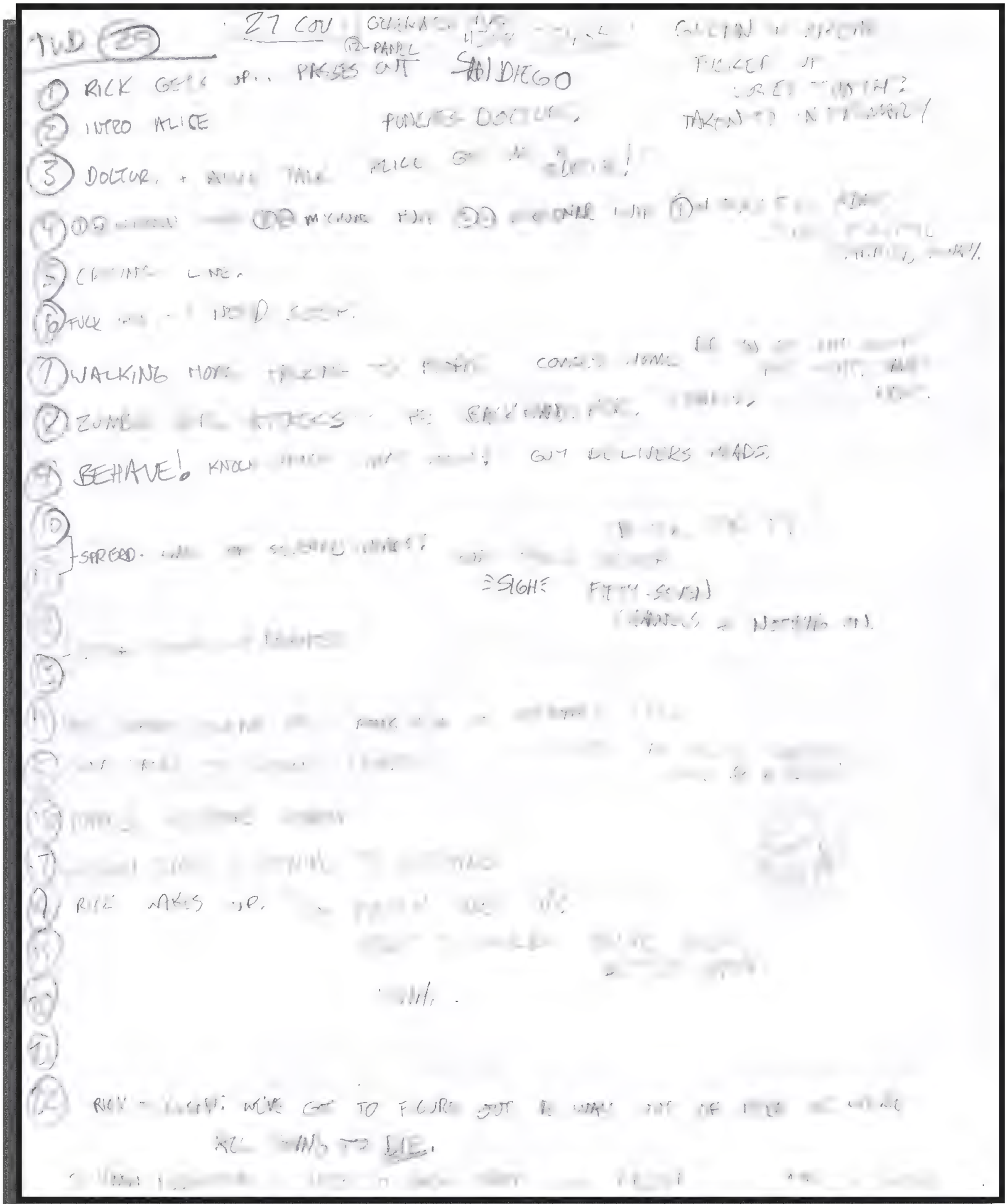
22: And again. "Looks at hand" doesn't really do the final image anything close to justice.

And at the end here, some dialogue notes for the next issue. Something that came to me that I wanted to jot down before I forgot it.

ISSUE 29

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Dear lord this issue is NOT a pleasant read. My goal as a writer is always to affect the reader in some meaningful way. I assume I was going for disgust with this issue, and I have to admit, going back and reading this issue after so many years, I really felt it. So, mission accomplished, I guess? Yeesh.

Moving into this Woodbury storyline was really the point of the story that was supposed to solidify that humans are the real villains of this story. The zombies are an element of the world, a mindless threat, something that can be managed, not a real ongoing threat. If anything, I really wanted the zombies to be pitiable. They're scary and threatening, but they used to be humans. There's something SAD about them.

That's one of the reasons Charlie was so perfect for this series. There was always something sad about his zombies. Go back and look at those heads in the fish tanks. I see agony and sorrow. You feel sorry for the people who ended up in those tanks.

But the Governor... yeah... that's a guy we hate. That guy is the worst. In trying to introduce a villain that embodies all that can be wrong with humanity... maybe I did go a little overboard. After this arc, and really, specifically, this issue, there's no doubt who poses the biggest threat to our characters.

At the top right of the page, you can see a scrapped idea for the issue. Glenn was originally supposed to be in the arena, potentially losing a tooth or two. In the end, I decided against it.

Also at the top, "generator splash" was probably scrapped because I remembered I'd ended a recent issue of the series with a splash of Dale finding the generator in the prison. So didn't need to do that again in Woodbury. It's enough to mention they have a generator.

There's some booth numbers from San Diego Comic-Con listed at the top. What year was this issue written? What booths was I planning on visiting that year? These are things that could be discovered. Who's willing to put in the work?

And yes, from time to time I scribble a little misshapen head on a plot while I'm writing these things out.

PAGE NOTES:

2: "Punches Doctor?" Yes, punches doctor! Why did I ever give myself a choice?

5: "Crying line" That's the line that was written at the bottom of the plot for №28. So I was just referencing that here.

7: The point of this scene was to show how The Governor was different to different people. It was important to me to show how people would ever agree to live under this guy's rule. Most people are unaware of what he's up to most of the time. Also, if you're interested in more Woodbury backstory or The Governor in general, you can track down the Woodbury trilogy of novels I co-wrote with Jay Bonansinga.

9-11: I opened this scene up a lot more in the script. Moving this spread to 12-13. I came up with the bit of Penny eating Rick's hand while I was writing, though that would be a nice little addition to the scene.

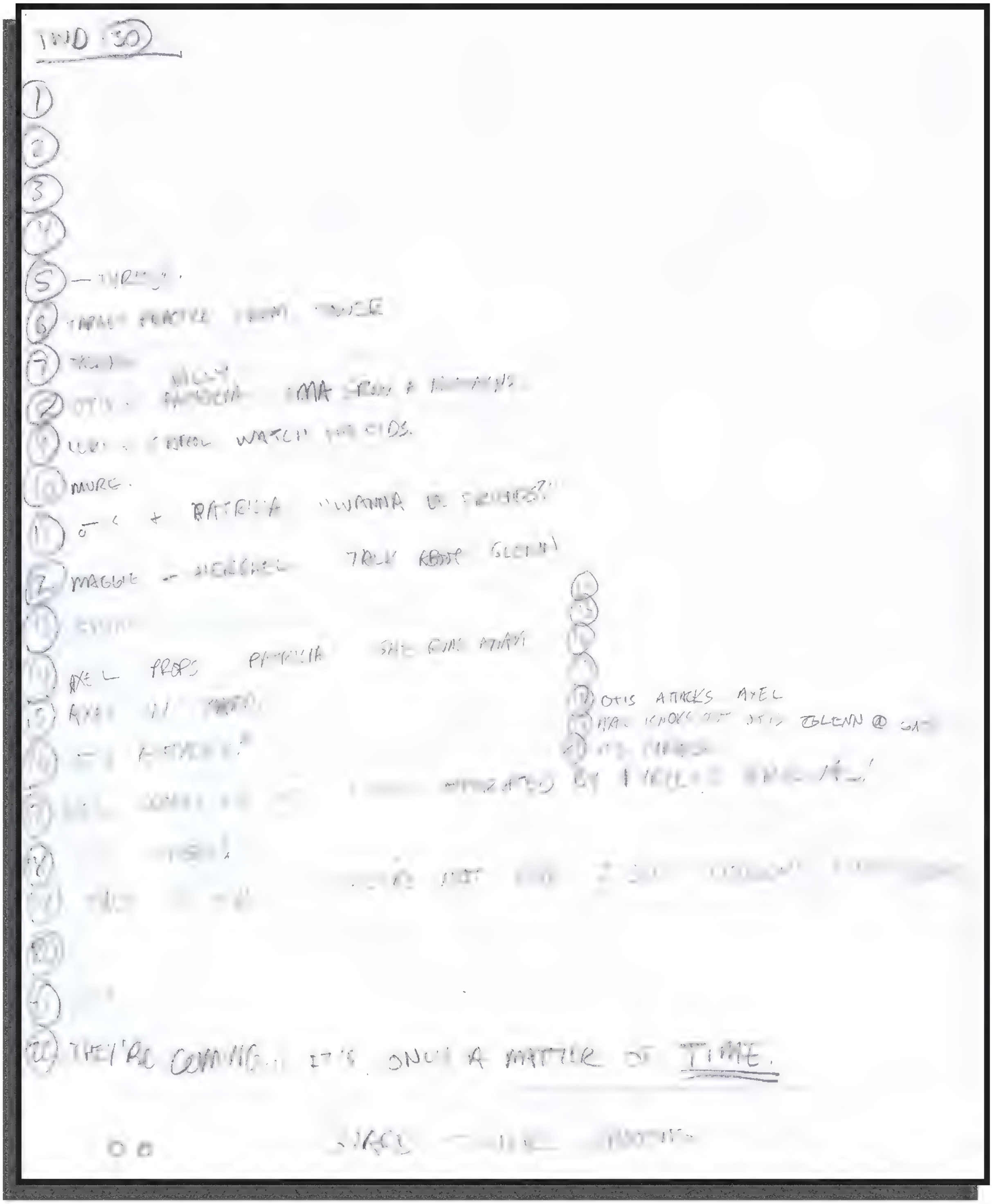
12-13: No clue what "extra stuff" I had planned with Penny here. Probably why I got rid of this scene. For the fish tank scene, which in the plot I hadn't come up with the fish tank part yet, I'd originally intended it to just be a shelf of severed heads, but the water in the tanks would manage the smell better. Although, typing this now... Penny is probably stinking up this apartment quite a bit on her own, so what was I thinking? Oh well, fish tanks are cool.

14-17: Yeah, this was all more or less written as it was plotted. These scenes were as painful to write as they are to read. I think that's why they're plotted so sparsely. I wanted to spend as little time as possible with these moments existing in my head.

18-22: So clearly this scene changed a bit during the plotting. Originally on page 22 we were going to end with dialogue between Glenn and Rick in the infirmary. Presumedly after Glenn was in his arena battle. Two characters talking about how they are "going to die" isn't the most dramatic way to end an issue. Thankfully, I came up with a better idea. You'll notice the "no police markings, could be a prison" dialogue was added to page 15 in the plot later. That sets up the new ending, with The Governor being in the infirmary instead of Glenn, proclaiming that he knows everything he needs to know about the prison. That's way more dramatic! Much better ending, bravo, young Robert!

Oh look! Down in the bottom right. I came up with a TPB title that wouldn't be used until volume 8, which collects №43-48. "Made to Suffer" would have worked as a title for this arc, for sure.

ISSUE 30
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman



What a fun issue this is. A nice check-in with all the people. And that cool misdirect where you think Glenn has betrayed them and he's running back to the prison, but no! It was Tyreese, out looking for them. I think it turned out pretty nice and as the end of an arc/trade paperback collection that final page serves as a nice foreboding moment for things to come.

Have we talked about usage of the term "zombie" in this section yet? I don't feel like we have, but man, oh, man, are these issues recently using it plenty. So what happened is, I started the book not really using it. I was dancing around it mostly. I think Glenn says it a couple times but those were mostly slip-ups. Then I came up with the "lurkers" and "roamers" terminology. After a while though, it felt silly to just keep using those over and over. So by the time I got into the teens and twenties on the book I thought, "Screw it, they're zombies, I'm just going to have people call them zombies. Who cares."

And that's the way it went.

Then when it came time to do the show, Frank Darabont didn't want to use the term, feeling like it wouldn't exist in this world if zombie fiction didn't exist in this world. And really, for this story to work, you can't just have people saying, "You shoot them in the head, y'know... just like the zombies from the Romero movies!" So you HAVE to assume this is a universe where George A. Romero didn't create the modern zombie. So, we coined the term "walkers" for the show.

Eventually, I stop using the term zombie in the comic... but by then, you guys probably won't even notice! And you'll eventually think I never used the term at all in the series! Fun!

Now, the plot for this issue is just a MESS! Look at all that empty space! And I even replotted pages 14-20 TWICE... and STILL didn't use what was in my plot in the final script.

No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't get this Otis fight to happen, so weird. Anyway... that's the fun part of this feature, getting to see how things changed along the way.

PAGE NOTES:

1-4: Okay, so look at that... all blank space! Well, that's because I knew this was going to be four pages of action. An armored guy, presumably Glenn, running through the woods avoiding zombies. Simple enough, no need to do detailed page breakdowns before diving into the script.

5: And look at that, I originally planned to reveal it was Tyreese on page 5?! How lame. And also, that's not a page turn! You can see page 4 and 5 at the same time, so revealing things on a right hand page is a real faux pas in comics. It was much better to save this reveal for later in this issue.

6-7: This scene is more or less exactly like the plot. Another good example of my shorthand. I just remember that this scene is Andrea and Dale. I don't even bother to write it into the plot.

8: It was an Otis/Patricia scene, but I saved that for later and changed Patricia to Billy.

9-10: This is a good example of a scene I'm going to build in the script. Carol touching Lori in this scene and Lori storming away and Carol being hurt... not planned at this point. I came up with that stuff during the writing of the scene. I knew what was coming in Carol's story and I knew I should do something to set that up, so I leave myself room in the plot and then come up with things later while I'm writing. I find, for me personally, it helps me go faster if I just move on if a scene doesn't come to me quickly. "Two-page hole here, okay, moving onto the next scene" is kind of my method. Something will usually pop into my head while I'm working on a different scene and then I go back. I can't recommend this enough to writers out there. Writer's block is really just when you're not ready to write something yet. Just move on and come back to it later. It'll come to you when you least expect it.

12-13: Another example of this here. Maggie and Hershel scene... what is this? No clue. When I'm writing this issue, I flip the Otis/Patricia scene to last and I have Axel in the scene with Maggie and Hershel and I make it more about the generator than them just talking about Glenn which gives me some kind of plot to discuss in later scenes. Movie time!

14-17: So clearly none of this made it into the book. I even tried to re-plot these pages on the right-hand side of the plot and didn't even bother before just making the changes in the final script. In the end, I just thought that it would be better to have a quieter issue with more character stuff and we didn't need another arbitrary fight in the prison. Axel and Otis fight? Over what, him eating all the candy bars? I hope that wasn't it. OH, WAIT! I just remembered that Axel and Patricia become an item in the next few issues. So that's more than likely what the fight was over. I just decided to hold this stuff for later since this issue didn't need it.

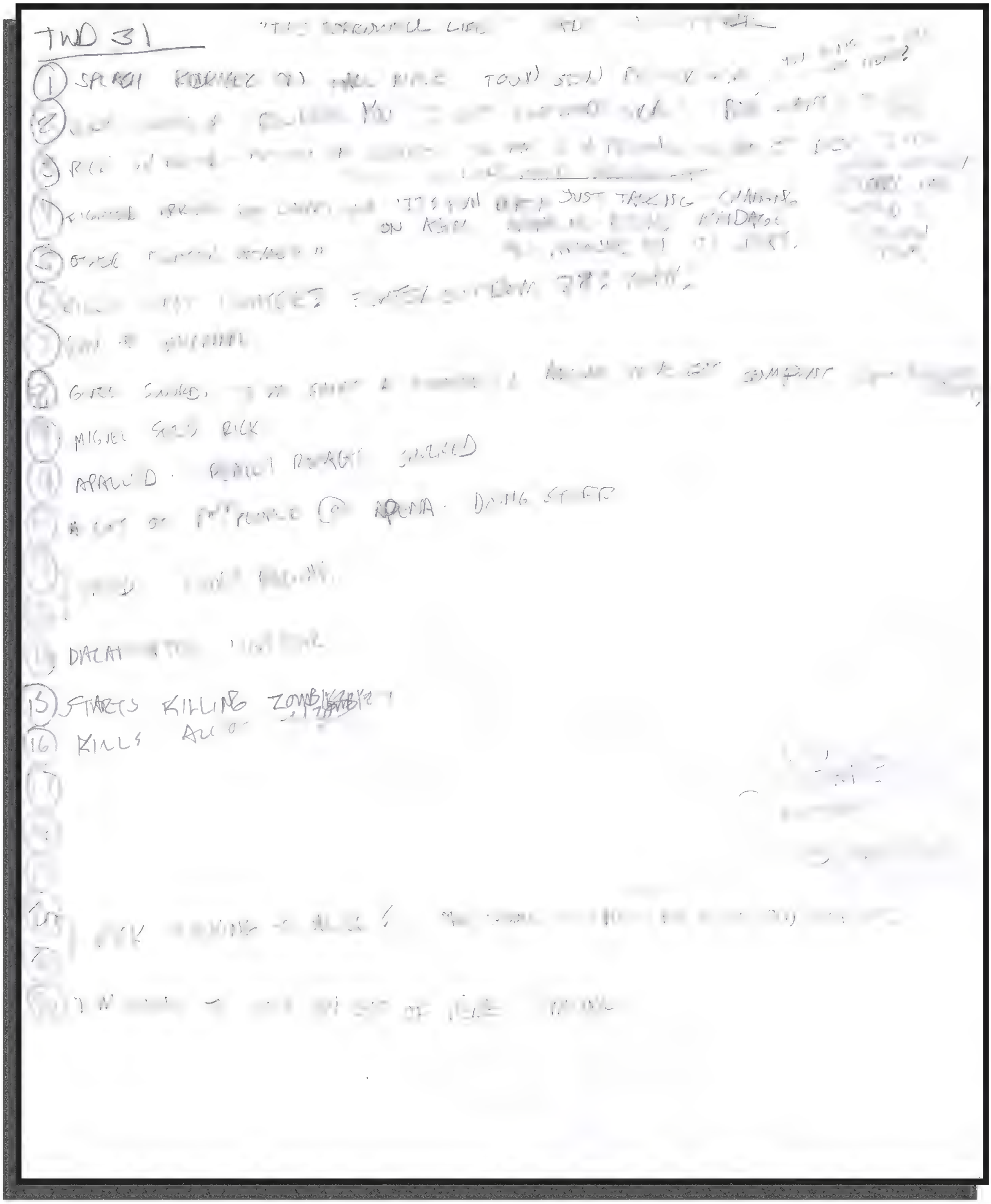
18-19: The Tyreese reveal was moved to later and I added that RV action bit instead.

20-22: Rather than the single page Governor check-in that's in the final issue, I'd originally planned to do a three-page sequence with him. In the end, I didn't have room for it and one single page worked! Anything to spare us the final page splash page close-up on the Governor delivering a dramatic line. THAT is a crutch I use too often... even to this day... because it almost always works! But I should try to do it less.

ISSUE 31

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Let's talk for a second about names. There's a Eugene in this issue, the poor fella who had all his teeth knocked out, only to have Michonne chop his damn head off. Brutal. If this isn't your first read-through of this story (and if it is, you really should tread carefully through these entries as there are at least minor spoilers, frequently) you're aware of a very major character coming up with the very same name, Eugene.

In addition to that, Doctor Stevens. Who Rick talks about in issue №2 as being the doctor who delivered Carl as a baby, is NOT the same Doctor Stevens who appears in this issue. As mentioned before.

So, what's the deal? Well... I'm human? I don't think it's really that big of a deal. I mean, I encounter people named Robert all the time and they're always completely different people! I suppose, though, in the context of a narrative story, people may expect the writer to be a little more careful with his name picking. Well... I'm pretty haphazard with mine.

Most of the time, names are just typed at random as I'm writing because I don't want to stop and spend time picking the perfect name. You'll notice often that names are different in the plots and then they change in the scripts. That's me just randomly changing my mind... and even then, I have another bite of the apple when I prepare the script for lettering, so I feel like I have three chances to change a name... so it's always a "I'll consider that name more carefully later" situation.

And then the name starts sounding right to me and it sticks.

But that means I'm not keeping a list of used names or anything, so this kind of thing happens... often... throughout this series. Don't get me started on the Monroe situation. We'll cover that later, many... many issues later.

Diving in on this plot, at the top there, more trade paperback titles jotted down at the top, otherwise no easter eggs on this one.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Always a good idea to feature a newish character on a splash page. Good way to make sure they're memorable. I'd start to use this technique a lot for the rest of the series.

3: The crossed-out line here is, "I still don't have proper anesthetic." And man, am I glad I stopped at "ant" because I have no idea how to spell "anesthetic" which... is y'know... apparent because I thought the third letter was "t." Is the goal of this feature to make everyone lose all respect for me? Sometimes it feels that way. Oh, well. If anyone cares, I was going to have Stevens complain about not having proper working conditions or something and I found it to be too tedious, so I cut it... like I maybe should have done with this whole discussion about the cut line!

4: This line is a lot of fun, it shows how I add things after the fact... and makes the line impossible to read. "It's fun beatin on a guy." wraps next to "Just talking -- changing bandage." and "Adrenaline -- Biters all around you - it's great!" is all there. Maybe should have kept some of this stuff in the comic.

5-8: This was all pretty much done without any changes from the plot.

9: Hey look! Martinez's original name was Miguel. No clue why I changed it.

10-16: All pretty much the same. Things are pretty sparse here, but again, it's just a shorthand to remind me what's in my head. I don't bother to write down every beat of a story I have planned out. I know I wanted Michonne to IMMEDIATELY decapitate Eugene on page 14. I knew that had to be the page turn moment immediately after the spread to show how fast it was. Sometimes the page turns dictate where things fall to achieve the pace you're going for.

17-19: And I left things nebulous here. Do we check on Glenn? More Michonne? Do I show The Governor's daughter? All options... and I chose... none of them. Instead choosing to expand the Rick/Alice scene and show how angry the Governor was. Another scene I added, which I quite like, was showing the angry woman in the arena. It really shows that as sadistic and ruthless the Governor is, he's beholden to these people. He knows he leads at their mercy. If he can't keep them happy, his position crumbles. And man... these people can be crazy.

20: Looking back, I honestly have no idea why I went so far to establish that Alice and Stevens were not a couple. Reading it over all these years later, it never even occurred to me that they could be a couple.

22: Not my best cliffhanger... but it works! Rick is escaping! WHOA! Right? Maybe? I don't know... I just work here.

ISSUE 32

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD (32)

(1)

(2) DEAD MAN!

(3)

(4) REFUSED.

(5)

(6)

(7)

(8)

(9)

(10)

(11)

(12)

(13)

(14)

(15)

(16) I'M NOT [illegible] — DOC DIES.

(17)

(18) KILLS IN DOC

(19)

(20) [illegible] SPLAT.

Another cool ending for this issue. Nice to see another ending that's not a big head saying something clever. I still fear I did too many of those.

If I wanted to be overly critical of my work (Is that the purpose of these? Sometimes it seems like it is.) I'd say there's too many panels this issue of people discussing logistics. "Help me over this wall." "Where is the apartment?" "Is this the right way to where they're keeping Michonne." It's a lot of discussing what they're doing. I guess some of it is necessary, so it's fine. And it all leads to a really great cliffhanger moment, so it works.

Okay, young Kirkman, I'll let this one slide.

This is a very dense plot, especially compared to the last few issues, and it appears to me that I wrote it pretty linearly from start to finish... and for the most part the script for the issue followed the plot very closely. That makes me feel like I knew the end point to this issue and was just trying to get there in an interesting way. That's probably why the issue is mostly people running from place to place and talking about it... and I probably thought that was somewhat dull so that's why Doc Stevens had to die.

Narratively, Doc Stevens had to die because it was just too convenient to have Lori be pregnant and have a full-fledged doctor fall into their lap. So, I get it. His death makes sense. In practice, I'm a little disappointed with how my younger self handled it. I feel like this death was one too many of the "Everything's great, whew!" surprise deaths. I'm pretty sure as the series progressed I leaned on that from time to time, because how can you not. But I imagine a fair number of readers saw Stevens' death coming when he said, "I'm just so relieved..." as a shadowy figure approached from behind.

Sorry, young Kirkman, this criticism sticks.

PAGE NOTES:

1,2: Next to no change from the plot to script.

3: First, note that I couldn't keep Martinez's name straight. I think I'd originally planned to call him Rodriguez after Robert, the famous director, but changed my mind at some point. But in the original printing of this issue, I believe, it was one of them from this era, he was actually called Rodriguez for an issue. Totally embarrassing. Thankfully we corrected it on subsequent issues and it was long forgotten and nobody knows! So as long as I don't bring it up... D'OH!

Also, you'll see that the plan was originally that Martinez was sent to kill Glenn and refused. I thought it was better if more people in Woodbury were unaware of the full extent of what The Governor was up to, so we lost this bit.

4,5: This Governor scene is straight from the plot.

8: Things were originally going to be a little different. More of a confrontation with Michonne, where she attacks them not knowing who they are.

9: There was going to be more fighting with guards, but in the end, I had Martinez take them out pretty easily.

10: Michonne's appearance was moved down to here.

11: This was changed to just have Stevens show up in the hallway like Alice had... just to cut down on logistics.

12-13: I love this spread in the comic. It's crazy that they've been in Woodbury this long and this really is their first view of the town. I loved how Charlie had pedestrians just walking in the background, noticing them, but not doing anything.

14-16: Okay, this sequence is TOTALLY different. Much better to give more room to the regretful moment of Stevens talking to a mother who is going to need him after he's gone. It's a better emotional beat than them just fighting another guard.

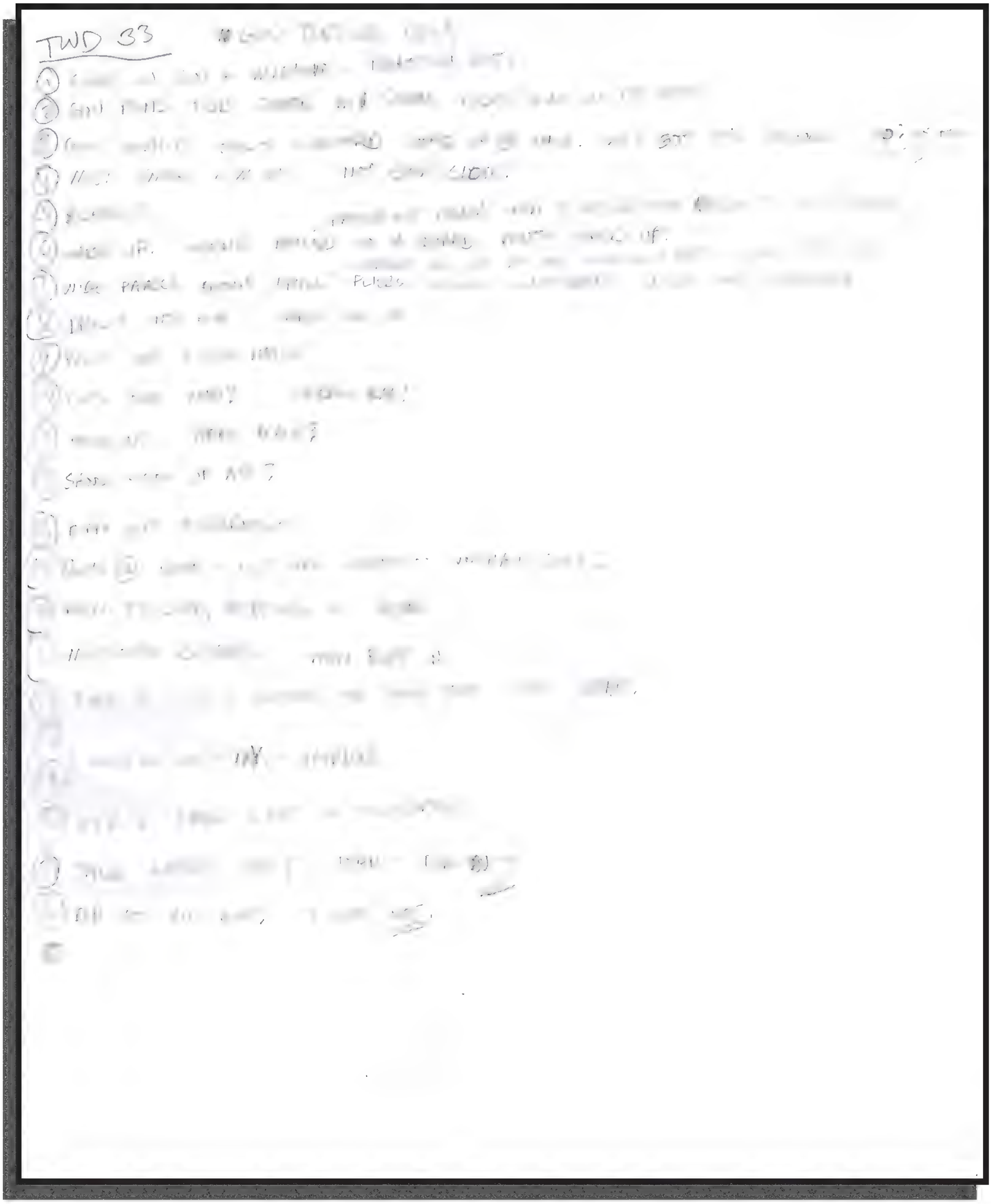
19: I do regret that I cut this page and we didn't get a bigger appearance from Bob, who has a pretty big part in the Governor novel series.

21: Michonne doesn't see the fish tanks, saved that for next issue.

ISSUE 33

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Okay... so... here we are, the Governor torture issue... as is noted at the top of the handwritten plot.

I suppose the goal of this issue was catharsis. We'd experienced (but not really seen) the horrible things the Governor has done to Michonne. We've gotten to know him as the worst villain this book has seen thus far. He cut Rick's hand off. We hate him. We really, really hate him. So theoretically, we want to see horrible things happen to him?

But do we?

I wanted to do an issue so over the top, so grotesque that even if you didn't quite find sympathy for the Governor, you maybe questioned yourself a little bit about why not? Or you regretted, at least a little bit, feeling a rush of "oh here we go" when the drill first went into the Governor.

Charlie Adlard actually refused to draw this issue when he first got the script. Not in a confrontational way. He very politely urged me to reconsider what I'd done and rewrite it. Something he did on another occasion way later in the series and I thankfully relented and took his advice.

This time I didn't.

At the time, it was important to me that we saw every single thing that happened to the Governor, for all the reasons I've already mentioned here. One of my favorite things about this series is exploring perspective. If we didn't know what the Governor had done... we'd think Michonne was a monster. But Michonne is a hero. These actions don't really taint our opinion of her very much. She was certainly a popular character in the book and only got MORE popular after these events. Because of perspective. We're on Michonne's side.

Once I explained my intent behind the issue, that we weren't celebrating the violence, that we were trying to make the reader uncomfortable, he agreed to draw it. And I promise this issue was no picnic for either of us. It was probably far harder for us to endure these scenes, writing and drawing them, than they are for anyone to read them.

Re-reading it now... whew, it's a LOT. And thinking back, BOY was it a controversial issue. I always strived to be as brutal as I believed this world could get and not shy away from things... for better or for worse, that was the intent of this issue.

Plot-wise, there is quite a bit of variation between the plot and the script for this issue. Let's dig in.

PAGE NOTES:

1: As each issue is going to be put right next to the previous one in the collections, I always try to write first pages that will fit nicely when printed next to the last page of the previous issue. This was a good one. Just showing the tension of Michonne showing up in the Governor's apartment, following up on the splash at the end of the previous issue.

2-3: Plotting out action and then transferring it to the script is a pretty simple process. You can see that these simple sentences translate to entire pages. The reason for that is comics are broken down into moments, and action has to have a certain number of moments to make sense and be followed.

4: This exchange between Michonne and the Governor was completely changed in the issue.

5: Instead of having a full page of black after the Governor is knocked out, I had him put up more of a fight to get more action between him and Michonne. Instead, I gave you a single small panel of black on page 6. So much more reasonable.

6: Yes. That says weenie. Yes. I am a child. Always have been, always will be. This issue was very dark and that is always very taxing on me. Things like this are meant to lighten the mood a bit.

7: "Charged up at the stadium." It was SO important to me that I explained how he could possibly have a charged-up drill in his apartment. I feel like that's another sign of me being a novice writer. I can't imagine I'd bother with a detail like that these days. I doubt it even registers to anyone else, but it's funny to me now looking back to it.

9-12: This whole section is moved around. It's all there, it all ends up in the comic, but things get moved back, pushed up, and changed. The only real bummer is that the arm severing ends up being on page 11, which is a RIGHT-hand page. A real no-no if you've been paying attention to these entries. Should have been a page turn. Embarrassing. Almost as embarrassing as that note that says "shoves stuff up ass?" I'm a comic writer, Mom and Dad! Are you proud of me?

13: The plot repeats itself here. "Ripps", heh. Anyway, it's possible I wrote this first and then moved it to page 9 without crossing it out as I filled in the plot more. These things are VERY often not written linearly. In fact, very often I'll go through and write 12, 14, 16, 18, 20 and 22 FIRST, since those will be the big page turn moments. Then I'll fill in the rest. Anyway... I definitely came up with the eye gouging that happens on page 13 while I was writing the script. Good thing I thought of it just in time!

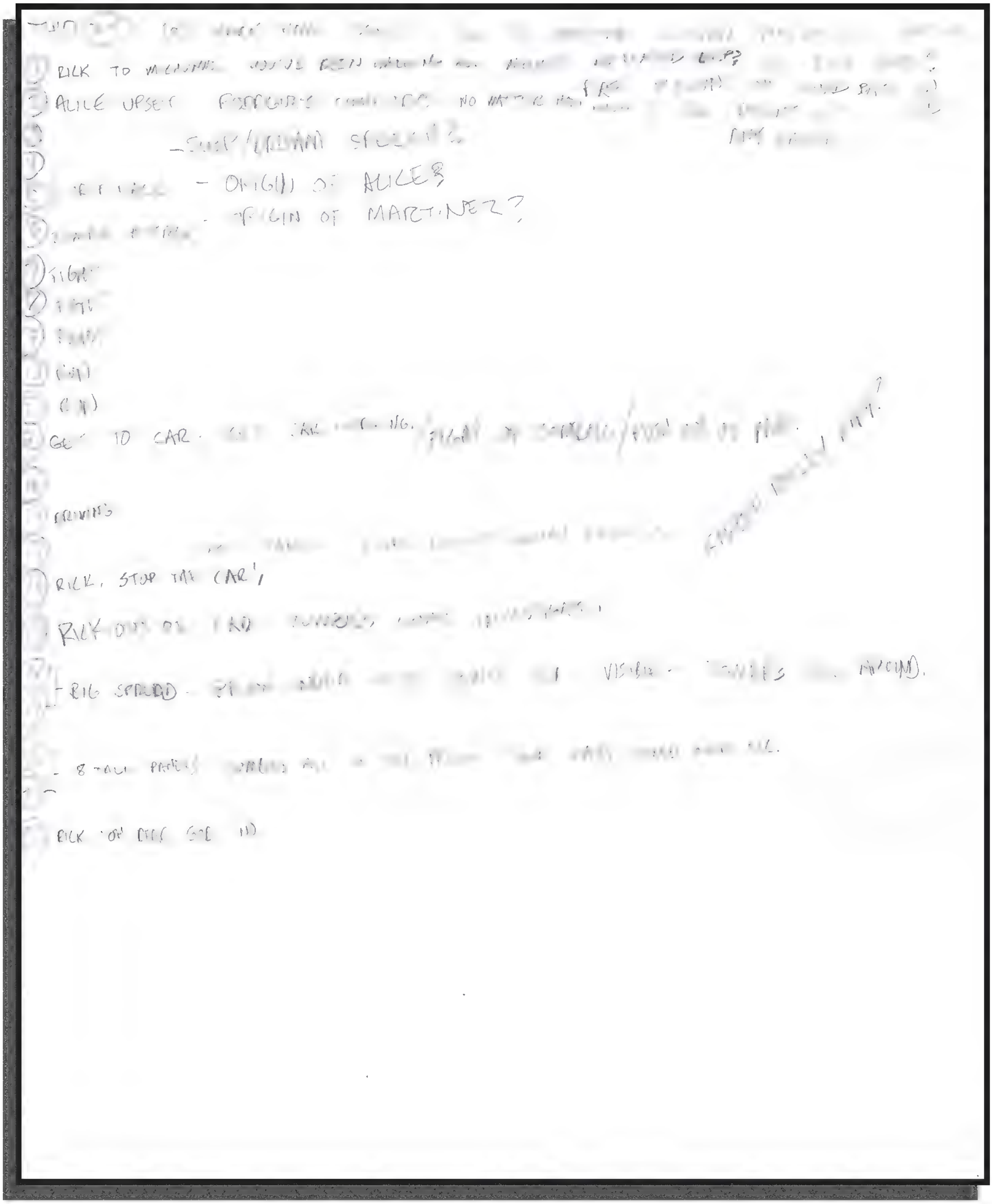
14-18: This section changed quite a bit. When I got into the script, I wanted to slow things down more. Give more time for Michonne to be emotional after what she's done. To show how human she still is. This isn't something she enjoyed. And yes, Michonne did cut off the Governor's weenie. I think we all agree he deserved it.

22: I kind of miss this line, but I see why I changed it. It's more intriguing to think Michonne may be cracking after what she did. "I hope not." meaning so she can torture him some more, is more "action movie badass", but that's not really what I was going for here.

ISSUE 34

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



This issue, to me, represents the fun of telling a long-form story in comic book form. You simply can't DO issues like this if you're not planning for the series to run a good long while. All of the comic series I'm writing now, and have been for a while, are not planned to run "indefinitely" so I don't get to do issues like this. It's kind of a bummer. Maybe someday I'll get around to doing another comic series that can run for 100-plus issues. I'm currently the only person to have done two Image comics that have hit issue №100. Would be kind of neat if I'd done three. We'll see.

Anyway, what am I getting at? Well... this issue is basically what it says at the top of the plot. It's the "get back home issue." That's pretty much the only thing that happens in this issue. The characters get back to the prison. Simple plot. Next to nothing to it... but it's a cool issue with some great action, and it's got a killer ending.

Some readers complain about slow pacing and issues that go nowhere. I've certainly experienced it as a fan, but I wouldn't consider this issue to be one of those. I mean, you got that Negan-like Martinez backstory, didn't you? What more could you want?

Note at the top of the page: "Go to national guard station. Get vehicles. Doc dies here? Pass Michonne on road back @ end." Around this time, I was becoming acutely aware that this series was going to be around for a while, so I started really plotting and planning much further out than I was previously. Now I was thinking about issue №50, I had eyes toward №75, №100, and beyond. So that note on the top of the page would have been written before I started writing issue №31. That's why I didn't know Doc Stevens was already long dead by this issue... and really, that's why NONE of this stuff happened in this issue. This is why I stopped plotting individual issues ahead like this after a while.

In the early days, Charlie Adlard used to ask me what was coming up in the story. After a while, he asked me to stop because he'd get excited about what was coming, and it would change by the time he drew it. That's because I was always thinking about the series, and if a better idea came to me, I'd do that instead. I always had a framework for this series, but it could change on a whim if a better idea presented itself.

Also, note in the middle of the page, someone had apparently recommended the music of "Corinne Bailey Rae" to me while I was plotting this issue.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Like most of this plot, pretty much by the numbers.

2: At some point, I got Martinez's name right and never messed it up again. This issue was not that.

3: Unfortunately, "sleep/dream speech?" seems to be lost to the sands of time. No recollection of that. Let's see if it pops up in an upcoming issue.

4-5: Origin of Alice wasn't really covered. Origin of Martinez was, for the most part. To be clear, I didn't have a plan for either of these, and they were more or less typed up on the fly while I was writing. Does it show? Is it obvious? Is that why Martinez is a gym teacher, and later Negan is also a gym teacher? What is it about me thinking high school gym teachers would be tough guys in the zombie apocalypse? Totally weird. Self, you are weird.

6: More of a Michonne attack, really.

7-9: Yep... there's fighting here.

10-11: Yep... there's running here.

12-17: All in line with the plot. The action needed was so clear in this issue, this plot was probably written very quickly. All the dialogue was written from scratch as I typed. Used to heighten where the story was going and the punch that the ending delivered.

18-22: Speaking of the ending... let's talk about how awesome it is to be a comic writer. This FIVE-page sequence was no easier to draw than any of the 17 pages that preceded it. If anything, these five pages were HARDER to draw than what came before. But as a writer, the dominos had been set up, the pace was locked in, and typing up these five pages based on the plot probably took less than a half-hour. Sometimes the hardest pages to draw are the easiest to write. To show you what I'm talking about... here's the FULL SCRIPT of the page 18-19 spread:

Page 18 & 19: two-page spread

Big shot. This should be like the spread at the end of issue 12. It'd be nice to show it at a slightly different angle so that we can see the parking lot from issue 25--just to show where it is (just out of frame in issue 12).

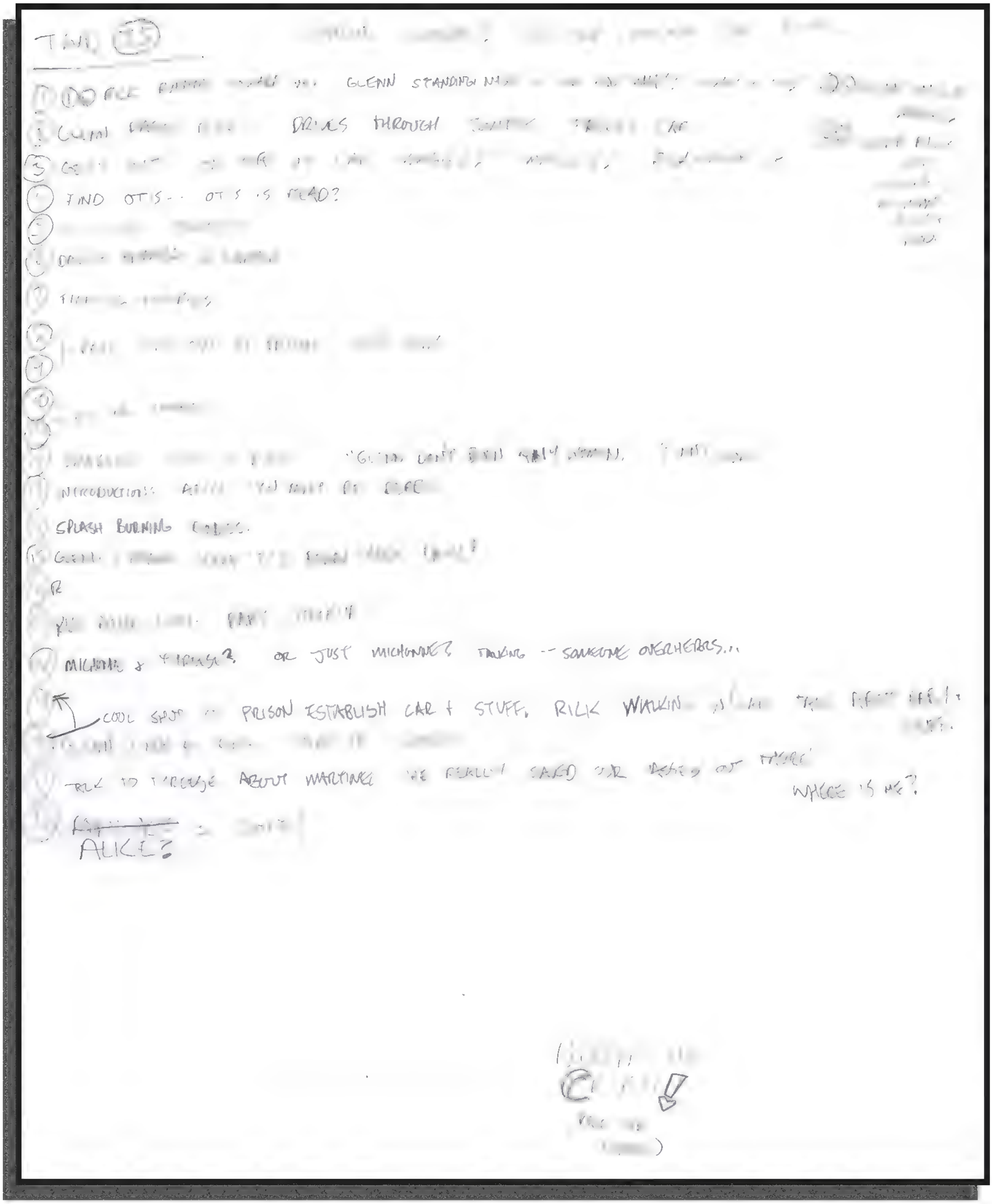
Show the car they just got out of on the road in front of the prison. Reference issue 30 here a bit. The three gates are OPEN--all the zombies that lined the fence before ARE INSIDE THE FENCE. Dale's camper is parked in EXACTLY the same place. There should be bodies visible on the ground here--could they be zombies--are they our characters--who knows? There should be no more than five zombies roaming around on the outside of the fence. The rest should be inside the fence--walking around--hundreds of them, in all areas, in-between the fence rows, all around the buildings, in the center area between the buildings--they're EVERYWHERE. They were unable to close the gates after they let Tyreese in.

Look at that! A simple run-on paragraph then gets magically turned into the glorious two-page spread you see in the issue. Comic artists are the best! Three cheers for Charlie Adlard!

ISSUE 35

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



One of the most fun aspects of writing THE WALKING DEAD (and to be clear, it was very fun most of the time) was taking some really mundane relatable part of normal life and adapting it to the zombie apocalypse. In this issue, that was shopping for an engagement ring. I really do think it was a big part of this series' success. How just by being in the zombie apocalypse, something as dull as ring shopping is transformed into Glenn digging through piles of dead bodies looking for a ring to steal off one of them. Fun times!

All in all, this is another action-packed issue of set-up leading to what would start in issue №37, our first big event of the series. All the pieces are being moved into their place, and the tension is ramping up.

You can see from the top of the page that I knew the big beats of the issue, but I was definitely looking for smaller things to fill the space. "Clearing fences?" and "Glenn looking for ring." Were me trying to come up with more ideas for the issue.

At the bottom of the page, there's an extra special treat. Apparently, back when I was plotting this issue, I thought "Adreniline Crush!" was a good enough title to write down. If I'd ever gotten around to doing the series, I swear I would have learned to spell adrenaline correctly. "Race Car Romance" is really a good example of how simple ideas are when they start. I'd have had this idea in the moment while plotting the issue and jotted it down here, so I didn't forget. I do have to admit the logo being RUSH and then altering it to CRUSH to make it a romance was pretty clever.

I've always said I want to do a romance comic one day. Maybe someday I actually will.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Pretty much by the numbers here. I usually have a pretty clear idea of how the issue starts and that doesn't change. Usually. And yes, I'm still calling Martinez "Rodriguez" in this plot. At some point, I'm sure I got the hang of that... I'm kind of running out of time, though (spoilers).

3: Originally, Glenn wasn't going to be injured in any way from the car wreck. I thankfully decided to make things a little more realistic... although, Glenn is still running around with a pretty bad concussion (at least), so it's not all that realistic... just how I like it.

4: For a while, I was wanting to have a character die off-panel. There were so many times in the series where characters would go on a run, and you wouldn't see some of the other characters for a while. Usually in stories, if you don't see a group of characters, no real status quo change is going to happen, because if it was, they'd show that to you. So, I'd always wanted to do something in this series where characters return to the fold and learn, along with the readers, that a character has died while they were away. That character turned out to be Otis.

6: You may read this and think, "was there originally going to be a scene of Dale and Andrea IN the camper?" No. That would be dull. This was just shorthand for "reveal Dale and Andrea were in camper". And look, where I grew up, RVs were called Campers. Is that a regional thing? We also called shopping carts "buggies." It was a weird time.

8-11: So this was originally plotted much simpler than it ended up being. I guess I was being lazy and thankfully corrected myself. I was really just going to have everyone rush out of the prison? Okay. That would have been anticlimactic and convenient, but okay. Glad I came to my senses on that.

12: This was moved later to allow for the space to do the emotional Rick Grimes reunion.

13: This ended up not even being needed. Who needs another introduction scene? Not me!

14: This fell in the exact same place, which is cool.

16: Glenn scene goes here. Quite happy with how this just comes off as weird until the later scene.

18: Need to fill a page with an interesting scene? Come back to the plot of Michonne talking to herself!

20: This was changed to have Carl suddenly feeling unsafe in the prison. Which in hindsight, could be seen as a little out of character, but really... I guess it's more character-building. These moments are what make him so strong.

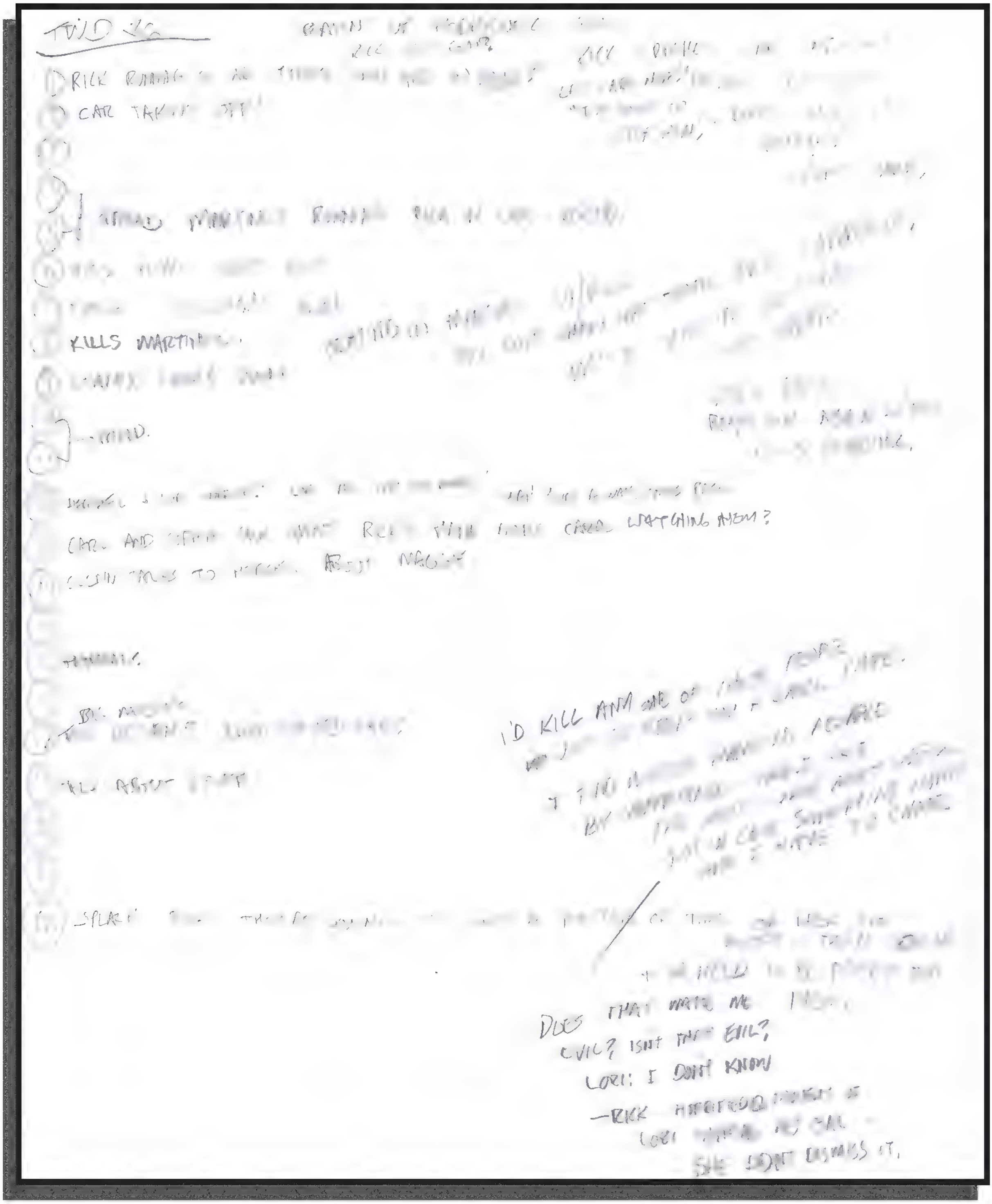
21-22: Okay. The note for page 22 was written first, and possibly days or weeks before the note for 21. It might have even been written when I was plotting №34, as I will often jot down notes of future issues as ideas come to me while writing. That's why it's Rodriguez on page 22 and finally, FINALLY correct as Martinez on page 21.

But when did I consider making ALICE the traitor? Man... what a wrinkle that is. That would have changed so many things. Maybe it would have been cooler? Maybe not... we'll never know!

ISSUE 36

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Oh boy, the killing of Martinez issue. This was a big one. The death of Dexter at the hands of Rick, that was much more easily justified in the moment. But Martinez? Much more of a gray area. Was he really going to bring the Governor back with him? Or was he telling the truth, was he only going to bring the innocent people of Woodbury? And did that matter? How many of them were actually innocent? Any of them could have posed a danger... but would they? I kept things ambiguous on purpose. I wanted people to think Rick might have just killed a guy in cold blood.

You want my definitive take? I'll give it to you. Martinez was a good man. He wasn't planning on bringing the Governor back. But if he made it back to Woodbury... who knows what would have happened. Maybe the Governor's loyal people would have overpowered him, made him take them to the prison, and the Governor would have attacked the prison at a time when they were in no way prepared.

So, Rick did kill an innocent man, but he DID pose a danger, so it MIGHT have been the right thing to do.

That's THE WALKING DEAD... gray areas.

Look at this plot. What a mess! This was a dialogue heavy issue... so you can see dialogue notes scribbled in all the open areas of the plot (and there are a lot of open areas).

I clearly had a handle on the pacing for the issue, I knew exactly where I wanted the spreads to go. I knew what I wanted that first half of the issue to be. Then when I hit the dialogue parts, things got a little murky.

And look, I'd originally had Martinez getting killed with a rock, but I changed that to choking, a more intimate, deliberate method of killing.

PAGE NOTES:

1: You'll see this runs into the basic plot of the issue written in the top right hand corner of the plot. I'll sometimes jot down the "big idea" for the issue up there.

2-5: Pretty much by the numbers. I knew exactly how I wanted this to be broken down panel-wise, so I didn't have to write much down in the plot.

7: Lots of shorthand here. "Talk. Selfish! Blah" is all I needed to remind me of what I wanted Martinez to say in this part.

8-11: I wanted a big death page-turn here, but the conversation spilled over, so the "death" moment unfortunately appears on a right-hand page. But in the end, I thought it was okay because the page-turn to Rick, standing in the open field, his world changed, was the moment I was building to. So that worked. And man, did Charlie deliver on this sequence or what? That sad, dead, mangled Martinez at Rick's feet is just SAD.

12: Again, minor notes get blown into full conversations. I have most of the beats in my head and these notes are just reminders.

13: Following the plot closely. I'm so happy with the last-minute scene button I came up with here as I was writing. The "Are you still my girlfriend?" "Yes." bit just cracks me up.

14: I love how practical and weird this conversation is between Hershel and Glenn. Normal things being made weird by the zombie apocalypse are the secret sauce of this series.

15: Blank page! I'll just make something up when I'm typing to fill space! Tyreese and Axel dragging bodies. That works, done! (Sometimes it's just that simple.)

16-18: 16 got moved to 17 and what was planned for 18, Rick's return, got moved up to here. Just a nice jumble to keep things moving clearly. The whole beats for Glenn's proposal to Maggie were more or less worked out in the script with little to no planning. Shooting from the hip is when I'm having the most fun writing.

19: "Talk about stuff." Eventually became the "Am I evil" talk that is scrawled in two parts in the bottom right-hand page of the plot (connected by that straight line). Look at that little note at the end: "Rick--horrified (by) thought of Lori thinking he's evil--she didn't dismiss it." I don't know that I really translated that into the comic well. Kind of a shame I lost that.

22: Kind of a lackluster cliffhanger, especially for the end of a TPB, but it happens from time to time, y'know. I figured it was foreboding enough to get the job done, and I suppose it was. "Woodbury is coming" definitely seems dire on a second read through when you know what's coming!

ISSUE 37
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

TWD (37)

(1) LOR - [illegible] SEX
(2) MORE
(3) MORE
(4)
(5) - SPREAD
(6) RICK + LORI TALK RICK: "WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?" LORI: "HUH?"
RICK: "WE WERE TALKING ABOUT ATLANTA -- AND YOU KIND OF ZONED OUT."
(7) RICK + LORI? SLEEP.
(8) ALICE CLEANING [illegible] -- TALKING [illegible]
(9) PATRICIA + BILLY TALKING... WHY [illegible]
(12) [illegible] HERSHEL PRESIDING. GLENN + MAGGIE [illegible].
(13)
(10) WEDDING NIGHT.
(14) - BASKETBALL GAME THREE ON THREE? ANDREA, GLENN, MAGGIE, [illegible] BILLY. ALICE?
RICK NOT PLAYING.
(15) PEOPLE @ BASKETBALL GAME TALKING. LORI -- THINKING ABOUT SHANE?
(16) - WEAPON INVENTORY. [illegible] TURNER + [illegible]
(17) DECIDE [illegible]
(18) RICK, GLENN, TYREESE, MAGGIE [illegible]

(19) @ RV LEAVES? PEOPLE IN RV TALK. CARL SLEEP, W. OTHER CELL.
(21) RICK -- REBANDAGING HIS STUMP. TALKING TO LORI
(22) SPLASH RICK, I NEED TO TALK [illegible] ABOUT SHANE

Another quiet issue and we open this one up with a flashback. If you were paying attention, you'll remember that issues №1 and №7 also opened with flashbacks. Which meant volumes 1 and 2 did as well. For a time, I considered having every story arc open with a flashback, so I could use them to flesh out the world and give backstory on the characters. In the end, I decided not to.

As I was writing the series over the years, "more flashbacks" was probably the thing most requested from the fans. So it might have been a mistake on my part, but I thought I had so much story to get to, that it would bog things down to jump into the past every six issues to tell more stories of the various characters pasts. And to me, I quite preferred getting the backstory out in dialogue scenes. I broke the cardinal rule of "showing not telling" constantly, which drove Ed Brubaker nuts. I recall getting many phone calls of him saying, "Why are you doing these long dialogue scenes of people talking around campfires?! Just cut to a flashback!" and I would argue that the point of the scenes was how they affected people in the moment. I was SHOWING... I was showing the characters reacting to the stories and what their emotional response was. And really, at the end of the day, what does Ed Brubaker know about writing?

Oh.

A lot?

Well, I wouldn't say he's THAT much better than me.

Oh. He is? More? A lot more?

Oh, yeah.

Well... maybe I should have listened to him.

MOVING ON. Shane was an important character to the opening issues of the series and it was great to be able to feature him in the series again, and show how his influence in this series is still ongoing, even though he died 30 issues ago.

I don't know why it's so funny to me, but I haven't given *Turner & Hooch* a second thought in the last 20 years, so seeing it mentioned in this issue gave me a chuckle. Excellent pull for the type of random VHS you might find in a prison, young Kirkman.

PAGE NOTES:

1-3: More of that glorious shorthand. Clearly, so much more to this scene than sex. I'm sure I've mentioned this, but I'll do it again. It always bugged my how the fanbase for the comics and the show were so hard on Lori for her infidelity. I mean, the world was ending. I'd cut my spouse a little slack, personally. All that said, I maybe should have spent a little more time featuring and focusing on her regret in the moment here. To me, it was there, but maybe a little too internal. I wish it came through more just how scared and panicked she was leading up to the incident, and how much regret and shame she felt after. She's only human, you know!

4-7: Following this plot very closely again, it would seem. Not a lot changed in the process.

8-9: I think the handwriting being so uniform on this one means it was written in one sitting and all in order. There were issues along the way that just rolled out of me. Seems like this was one of them. Not a lot of second-guessing going on here.

10-11: A lot of googled bible passages here. Weddings in comics tend to be boring. I think it's so funny that it's a trope that sells comics, "The Wedding of" issues are always highly publicized, sell extremely well... and are super dull. So any wedding I've done in a comic has taken up about two pages MAX. That's right, go look. I promise that's true. Mark and Eve's wedding in INVINCIBLE was ONE PAGE. ONE. Do your artists a favor, comic book writers, keep those weddings short. NOTE: Best comic wedding ever: *Savage Dragon #41.* Larsen turned it into an awesome cameo fest, the wedding is played for comedy and then a massive fight breaks out and there's a ton of action. That's good comic-booking.

13: This scene is blank. Very likely that I didn't have the Tyreese/Michonne moment planned at all and just threw it in during the typing phase. Possibly to set up their small exchange at the RV.

14-15: This scene, and the scene at the end, is basically to show Rick adjusting to his missing hand. He's not the guy at the center of the action anymore... for now.

16: "Weapon inventory. Generator on - *Turner & Hooch.*" Beat THAT, Brubaker!

18: Yeah. Sometimes I just list who is in a scene and figure it out later.

20: "People in RV talk." became: "It stinks in here." Heh.

21-22: And again, we end on a big dramatic moment rather than some crazy cliffhanger. I still think I prefer these types of emotional endings for an issue. If you're doing your job right, this drama should be as engaging as a gun to a random character's head. Let's hope I don't defuse the tension immediately next issue and not cheapen this scene!

ISSUE 38

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD (38)

(31) [illegible]

(1) RICK + LORI [illegible]

(2)

(3)

(4) [illegible]

(5) ONCE [illegible]

(6) [illegible]

(7) [illegible] TODAY

(8) ALICE LORI [illegible] UP.

(9) [illegible]

(10) DRAWING [illegible] ARE [illegible] GOING [illegible]; GLENN "OK. WE CAN JUST FOLLOW THE SIGNS!

(11) BACK [illegible]

(12) T: [illegible]!
M: [illegible] NOW.

(13) [illegible]

(14)

(15)

(16) [illegible]

(17) [illegible]

(18) [illegible]

(19) [illegible]

(20) [illegible]

(21) [illegible]

(22) [illegible] PRAYER

(39) BILLY TRIPS. SPILLING GAS [illegible] RV [illegible] GAS.

I don't know, people, I just love this issue. Not a lot of zombies. Not any really big moments. Maybe not the most memorable issue. I mean, when we were adapting this era for the TV show, I never heard a lot of, "Man, when are you getting to the stuff in issue 38?!" And yet, it's a satisfying character-based issue. I mean, I'm taken with it for the Tyreese foot gag alone! Man, that was good.

Really not trying to gush on my own work, and like all issues, 90% of what makes it good is Charlie's art. I mean, look at that opening page! Charlie just absolutely killing it with Rick showing a whole range of emotions on a mostly silent page! So again, not gushing about my own work. No, the point I'm trying to make... is that the quiet issues are the point.

The big, loud, crazy memorable issues--those are the tentpoles that hold the series up, keep the blood pumping, if you will. But without issues like these? Those issues would be completely hollow. Without these moments of Andrea letting Tyreese use her rifle, or Glenn being excited to find a truck, or Alice confiding in Billy just how unprepared she really is, or Axel being Axel... you wouldn't CARE if the shit hit the fan and characters started dying.

So often in this run, I'd hear about filler issues. "Oh, that was a filler issue." And it really used to frustrate me. Like we were stalling for some reason, or like I just didn't have a good enough idea for an issue, so I just wrote them looking for supplies. Trust me, that never happened. Every issue, for better or for worse, was part of a plan.

So yeah, this issue is a filler issue. And what's the best part of a pie? The filling. (Don't say the crust, you weirdo).

Anyway... was that a rant? I suppose so. Sorry about that.

Look at the top of the page. Getting gas for generator because the delivery of Lori's baby is taking too long. An unused plot for issue №39. Oh well. Looks like along the way of writing this issue, I had them find gas and rendered this idea obsolete. And at the bottom... another abandoned issue №39 plot. Oh well, they're not all winners.

PAGE NOTES:

1-3: Clearly had a plan here. I mean, it's more or less what Rick told Dale in issue... 8? Basically... but more emotional because it's Lori. I love that there was never a way to definitively say who Judith's father was in the series.... but y'know... I always considered it Shane's. Is that definitive? Maybe? I mean... it was obvious, right? No? Maybe? Have I said this before? I don't even recall. Hey, TWD is 20 years old next year. How crazy is that?!

4: Love how detailed a note I left myself for this scene.

5: Dale didn't actually end up going on this trip. He stayed back with the twins.

6: Changed my mind on the breakfast bit. More room for target practice!

7: "(cover)" Making a note to myself that this scene is important since it's the cover image. Remember, in these days, the covers were drawn long before the issues were written. So, I had to make sure I remembered what the covers were and work them into the story. Sometimes it was easy, as things were well planned, and sometimes I had to work hard to squeeze them in somehow because I'd changed my mind or come up with a better idea for this issue.

10: Glenn originally just noticed the sign and said, "Look, we can follow the signs." Thankfully, I realized at some point that was painfully convenient and I came up with the Axel "peeing on something that turned out to be metal" gag. Writing!

11: "back @ prison" is just shorthand for "plug something in here so there's some kind of passage of time between them finding the sign and showing up at the national guard station. ALSO, burn this page 11 with a quick one-page scene so the arrival at the station can be a glorious two-page spread on pages 12-13. Then, what I do when I'm scripting is go, "Okay, one-page scene, who haven't I shown this issue? Who needs a scene? Hershel and Patricia? Oh, they haven't spoken since Otis' off-camera death! Yeah... need something for that. Easy!"

14-15: The cool truck page turn misdirect was something else I came up with during the scripting stage. Page turns are a really great function of comics that, for me and probably most writers, really helps with pacing... and almost makes it feel automatic. Every time I get to a page turn, I think, "what can I put here? What could make this issue more exciting?"

16-17: Axel ended up going on the mission. I like this bit of dialogue, though. Shame it never made it into the book (that I recall). The idea was someone was anxious about having kids around Axel and he replied, "I was in here for armed robbery, as long as your kids aren't a liquor store, they're safe." Just in case that wasn't clear from my handwriting.

18: Instead of that scene, I added a one-page Alice scene for 17. AND used page 17 to set up the rad page-turn 18 splash page. Originally, I was just going to have a full page of them leaving... and deciding to go to Wal-Mart?

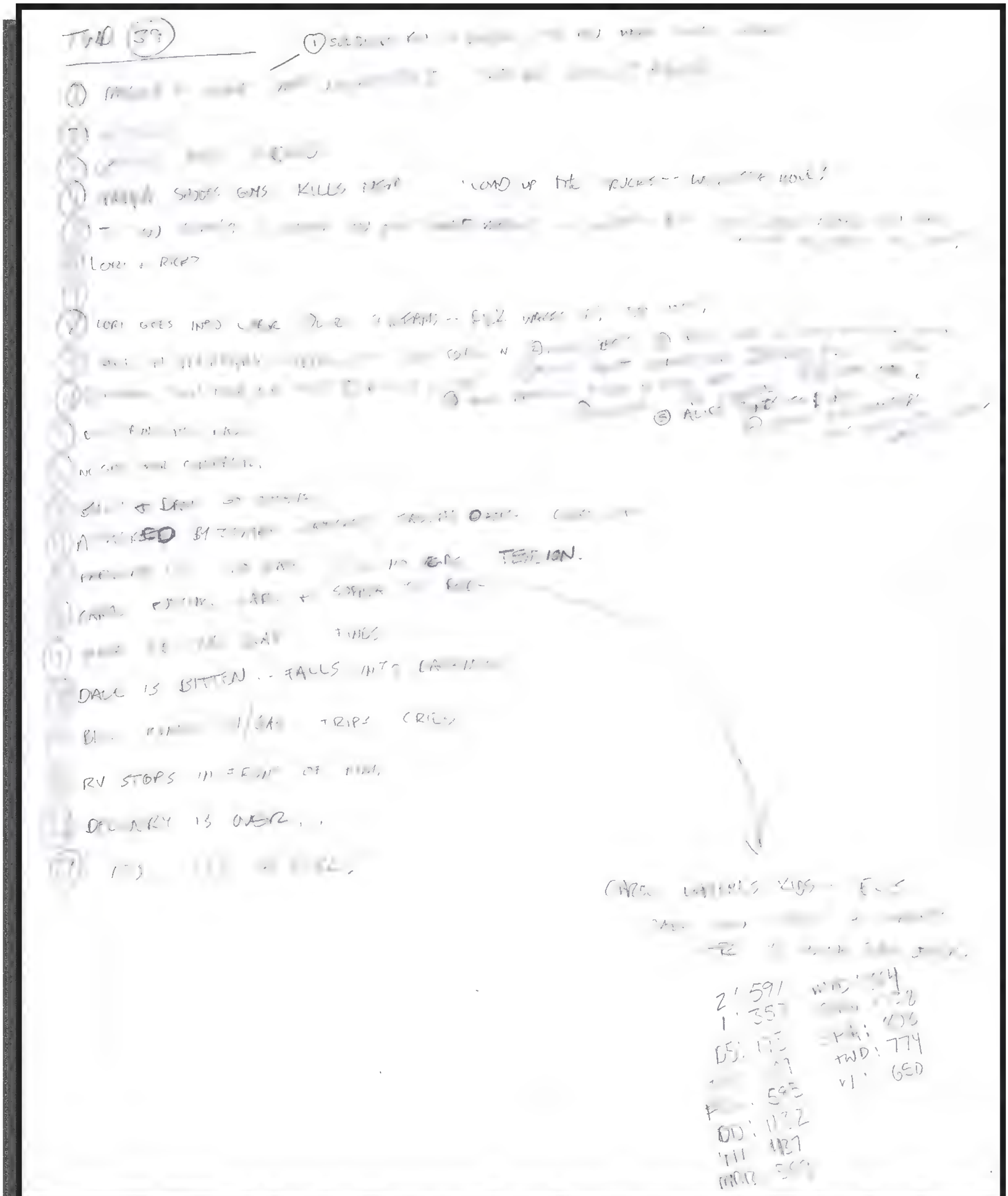
19-20: Well, actually... in the final comic I opted to spend more or less two full pages deciding to go to Wal-Mart, instead of showing them at Wal-Mart. This issue apparently brought to you by Wal-Mart? I think the trucks hitting the zombies is a little cooler than shopping, but maybe I was wrong.

21-22: So much talk in this issue about not alerting Woodbury to their presence that maybe this cliffhanger is a little telegraphed... but... it still works! Right?

ISSUE 39

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Spoiler alert, apparently those two notes for this issue that are on the written plot for issue №38 WERE actually used. Both of them. So... yay for plotting ahead.

Also, yeah, what an action-packed issue. I mean, we start with a Glenn near-death, then there's a Dale near-death, then there's kind of a Billy near-death... and man, that final page fake-out with the baby is solid gold. Very, VERY proud of that one. Lots of cool tension and page turns this issue. All in all, I feel like this issue more than makes up for any of the previous "building" or "character" issues that are sometimes erroneously labeled "filler".

Huh? No chip on my shoulder. Nope.

Two things: this issue was plotted VERY fast. I can tell because it's a long sequence of short sentences that look to me like they were written chronologically. If you look, you can sometimes see the size of the letters vary widely on these plots; that's because sometimes I'll plot half an issue and then come back days later and do the rest, and it's often jumping around and not plotting linearly. Very often, I'll sit down to plot, and it'll be, "Okay, need to figure out what happens on pages 16 and 17", and that's all that needs to be done. Not so with this one. I started at the top and just ran through it. Start to finish. That means... second thing, a lot got adjusted along the way.

So yeah, quite a bit was changed from plot to script. Some stuff minor, some stuff not so minor.

Let's dive in.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Notice I did go back and change what page 1 was, so that additional "1" at the top was added later. I gave the Woodbury soldiers a page to set things up.

2-3: So... didn't plan on Glenn getting shot at all initially. That would have been the biggest change in the issue. Originally our group was just supposed to get their "asses kicked" until Andrea saved the day.

4: This was more or less moved to page 3, and that allowed for some RAD Michonne action on page 4.

5: Tyreese was originally going to say, "Those were real people you killed" and Andrea would reply, "What's the difference?" (I swear "diff" was only because I was nearing the edge of the page.) In the end, I decided to actually have Andrea emotional about shooting people for the first time. Up to this point, she'd only ever shot zombies.

6: "Lori and Rick?" These are always suggestions. I'm pretty sure I knew this opening scene might expand beyond the five pages allowed in the plot, so I left 6 and 7 open if I needed them.

8: This scene took a much different shape in the script.

9-10: These two pages, by contrast, were plotted super tight. I actually plot my comics more like this most of the time now, where I break the plot further into panels by hand before moving to the script stage. I don't really do a lot of revising after the script stage because, really, it's kind of the third version of the story by the time it's typed up. For these two pages, I had a very specific idea for how they should go, so I wanted to jot it down before I forgot. If you compare these pages to the final issue, they're almost exactly how they ended up.

11-14: These pages all mirror the plot very closely. Of course, there was a lot of detail that wasn't worked out until the script stage.

15: "Parking lot. No gas. Still no gas. Tension." I feel like this is the best plot page I've written in the series so far. It's also worth noting for any aspiring writers out there... I highly recommend writing "tension" in your plot and outline stage and just figuring it out later. It's really fun when you sit down and see your past self did the hard work of writing "tension" down without helping you in any other way. It's great. Really.

16-17: This whole scene was just thrown away. Maybe it ends up in the next issue, who knows? Certainly not me!

18-20: This was moved up two pages to allow space for the follow-up. Maybe I originally planned to do a double cliffhanger, where you thought it might be a Woodbury truck that pulls up in front of Billy? Regardless, needed to tie up this scene more in the end, so that's why the new pages 19 and 20 were needed.

21-22: Man... so proud of the "Your baby, it's a..." fake-out. I mean, a full-page splash of "It's a girl." You didn't expect that to be the end of an issue of THE WALKING DEAD, did you? Honestly one of my favorite "cliffhanger" endings of the series. And Charlie's newborn baby is so gross. Very, very cool.

WHAT ARE ALL THOSE NUMBERS AT THE BOTTOM, ROBERT?

Well, I'll tell you, dear reader. Around this time, I was OBSESSED with sales on the series. Because if the series sold well, I got to keep going. And sales were pretty strong by this point. Each issue was selling near 20k an issue, and sales were ticking UP a few hundred or so copies each issue, which is unheard of. Most series drift down and are propped up by event issues to slow the bleeding for as long as possible. So, I was really paying close attention to the sales to make sure I could comfortably reach issues №50, and №75, and №100, and hopefully beyond.

If sales started dropping... well, I had to start planning to wrap things up.

So, I'd call Eric Stephenson, and I'd say, "What are the numbers for this month?" And he'd say, "It's only been a day or two, all the books are in the hundreds. Leave me alone, Robert." And I'd get him to give me a cross-section of sales from books for that month, and then I'd do the math to see how the books tracked against last month to see if numbers went up. So, while TWD was only at 774 copies at the time. I could take that 1,138 number from *Spawn*, get what percentage of the previous month's sales that was, and use that percentage to guess where TWD would end up...

...

Like I say... I was obsessed! Maybe it was a little embarrassing... but that's how important telling this full story was to me!

ISSUE 40
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

TWD (40)

JUNE.

(1) LORI [illegible] BABY [illegible], EXHAUSTED [illegible] PUSHING!

(2) [illegible] TOW

(3) [illegible]

(4) [illegible] RICK'S FACE SPLATTERED W/BLOOD.

(5) [illegible] OUT.

(6) [illegible]

(7) [illegible] HAT

(8) [illegible]

ALICE WAKES UP [illegible]. ANDREA IS THERE ALICE!" SORRY I WOKE YOU UP."
I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO ALONE.
DALE: "IT'S OKAY, HONEY." END ON ANDREA LOOKING [illegible] THEY EMBRACE DALE!")"

[illegible] VOICE WEAK - WHAT THE FUCK WERE YOU THINKING.
SHE HITS HIM-- BREAKS DOWN INTO CRYING.
LORI IS [illegible] BABY. RICK: "I THOUGHT I HEARD YOU WERE AWAKE.
SPLASH? [illegible] BLES -- SWEETTING. CARL: "SHE WON'T EVER BE SCARED"
IF ANDREAS CALENDER IS RIGHT -- IT'S JUNE." SHE'LL THINK THIS IS NORMAL.
[illegible] TWO [illegible] AD. RICK + LORI TALK ABOUT HOW GOOD IT'S BEEN. FEEL LIKE AUGUST. "FELLS LIKE [illegible]" [illegible] HERSHEL SCOLDS ABOUT HELL NOT [illegible] GIRL.
[illegible] AT [illegible] DREAMS - [illegible] MAKES. AND EVERYDAY [illegible] SEEMING [illegible]
[illegible] -- GLENN SHARES HEAD - TALKS ABOUT MARRIAGE.
[illegible] GOTTA DO SOMETHING [illegible]
[illegible] PERFECT
[illegible] RICK.
DALE: "EVERYTHING IS FINE. WORK, [illegible] TIME UNTIL [illegible]
(W) DALE LOOKING OVER.
(W) ANDREA + THERESE ~~RICK.~~ CAST LINE ~~CAST A~~ SMILING -- TALKING AT TARGET PRACTICE.
[illegible] NEXT ISSUE.
(51) CON - CARL IN RICKS ARMS
RICK [illegible] SOMETIMES -- ITS HOT [illegible] WATER
[illegible] ISSUE - OR WE'LL [illegible] A [illegible] GETTING OUT OF [illegible]

Look, I'll just open by saying... 43-year-old Robert Kirkman is digging the work 28-year-old Robert Kirkman did during this run of issues. Setting that scene up so it goes from a birth directly to an amputation, and the button on the scene being Lori gleefully naming her baby? That scene plays. Is it okay to compliment my past self if I also admit that it makes me feel like I've lost a step in recent years? I feel like these entries are revealing too much of my neurotic self-doubting side.

I'm sure I HATED these issues immediately after I wrote them.

One thing I will reveal, Alice's line about how crazy the night was, including "taping up Glenn's ribs", was a very late addition. Probably after the issue was drawn. I'd kind of forgotten that I'd added the scene of him getting shot. Remember, that wasn't in the plot and was just thrown in during the scripting stage to spice up the scene. So... it slipped my mind this issue. Thankfully, there's a nice two-week time jump in this issue, so the armor stunted gunshot wound... isn't an issue after this.

The great thing about comics is that you can always just completely rewrite scenes after they're drawn if you ever need to. Anything can be fixed at the last minute... well, almost anything.

Hey, look at that plot over there on the left! That thing is PACKED!!! Clearly, there was a LOT I was trying to cram into this issue. Maybe... just maybe, when you plan out six-issue arcs, your first two or three issues in that arc are kind of... leisurely paced, and then as you get to the last three issues of the arc... you really have to hit all the correct notes to fit everything in by the trade break. I'm not certain that's what happened here, but it sure seems like it.

At the top right, I'm just... listing the issues in this trade arc, like a moron? I could have written 37-42... but I didn't. Oh, and look, I think this was the first plot where I wrote the month it was meant to be released. The internet tells me this issue was released in August, so either the issue was late (that did still happen sometimes back then, it wasn't until late when the series would start its PERFECT shipping schedule that would last until the end), or I was wrong about the month.

PAGE NOTES:

1-4: All this was pretty much by the numbers exactly how I plotted it.

5: Dale passing out was crammed onto page 4, so I could wrap things up here, leading to Lori naming Judith. Where's that name come from? Probably my spam filter, where I'd look for names I don't randomly think of. I have a Rolodex of about 20 names I would just use over and over again. Names like Allen, Glenn, Carol, Andrea... so to branch out, I started skimming my spam folder for the fake names meant to trick me into thinking I'm getting a real email.

6-7: These were turned into a two-page spread. Why? Because I think they look cool. Maybe I use it too often, but I think there's a great utility from massive wide images at the top of a spread with a page worth of panels crammed in below it. You'll see that layout used frequently in every book I've ever done.

8: That arrow means I considered moving this scene to page 9 but then didn't.

9: This scene was added later as a set up to page 10.

10: The "all parts of the buffalo" plotting method. Eventually, you'll see one of these plots with every inch of the page scribbled on and all kinds of arrows drawn pointing to things that should be connected, but there wasn't enough room.

11: Can you even follow these? If you read from the top, the line kind of goes across, and then if I need more, I go down a line, but I try to cram things to the right, so I still have room for the following pages, but then when I do those pages, it all runs together. The full thought here is, "Lori is breastfeeding. Intro Carl to baby." Rick: "I thought I heard you were awake." Carl: "She won't ever be scared. She'll think this is normal." The other stuff around all that is for the other pages.

12: So, you can kind of see how this one wraps around the previous page all the way to "Hershel scolds about hell."

13: Good thing this issue follows the plot so closely so I can just ramble on about how to read this plot. This is riveting, isn't it? I really do wonder how many people actually read these rather than just basking over Charlie's art colored by the esteemed Dave McCaig, and then just skip this stuff.

15: At some point, I realized crutches would work much better than a cane. You'll see "She brings him crutch" lower on the page.

17: Gotta do something with Carol. Yep. Leaving myself room to just figure this out later.

18-20: No note about teasing the potential Andrea/Tyreese relationship here, but clearly that was part of the plan.

21-22: A quieter ending than usual but a satisfying one, nonetheless.

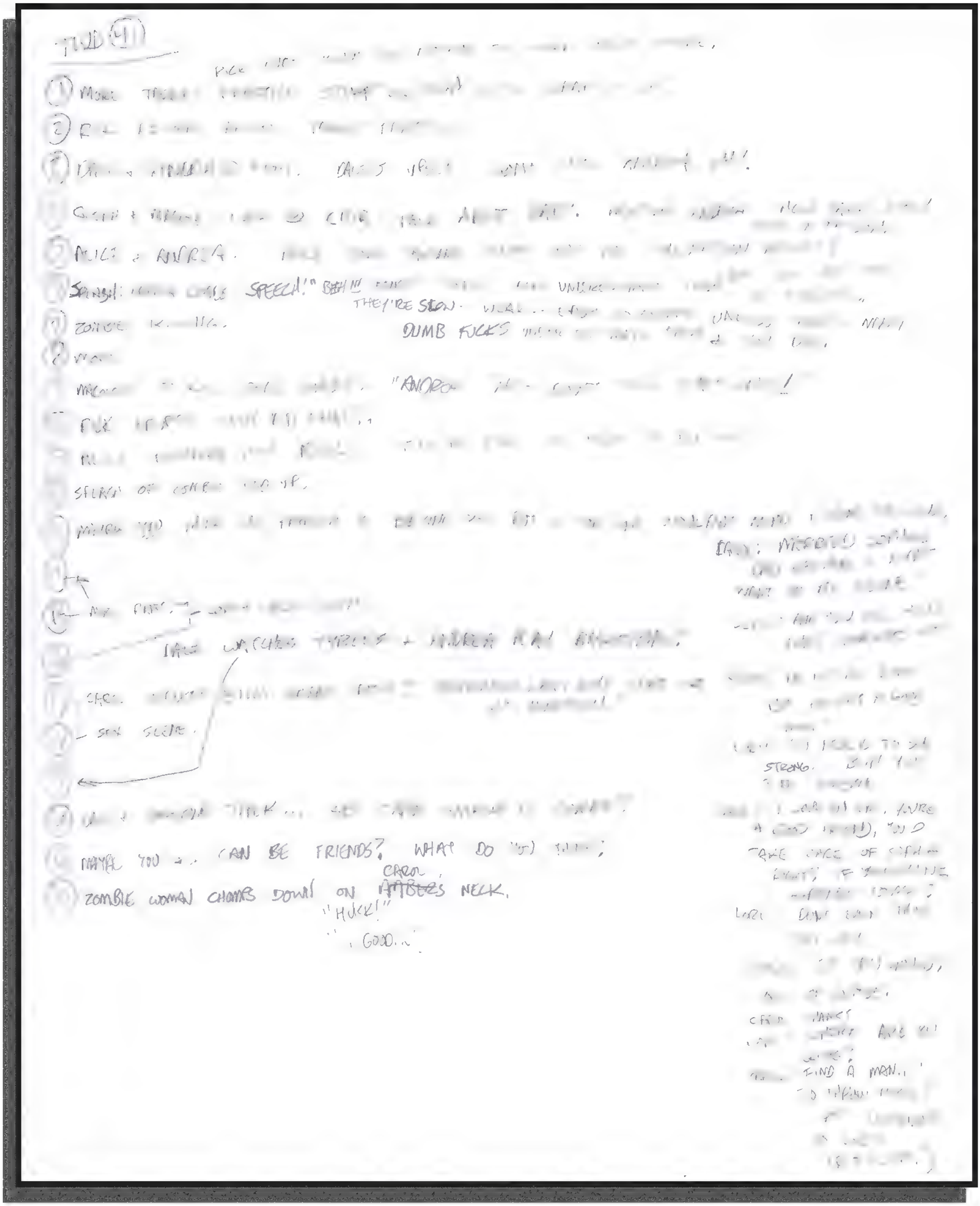
Over on the bottom right, you'll see my little checklist for the issue. I knew I wanted those scenes in the issue, but didn't know what order or how big each scene would be. You'll see there was at least one that was bumped to next issue.

Along the bottom of this plot, you'll see ideas for future issues, this will happen more and more as we get deeper into the series, so look out for spoilers if you're trying to read this series cold.

ISSUE 41

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Oh, look, another pretty dense plot. A little bit of rearranging there at the bottom, but I clearly had a pretty good idea of what this issue was going to be.

So, let's talk about this story. First of all, yes, this is how Carol's story ended up in the comic. If you're a TV show fan reading this series for the first time, you might be thinking, "What the heck? REALLY?!" And I completely get that. Heck, I even agree. The difference being that in the comic, Carol wasn't played by an actor like Melissa McBride. Actors can really drive story, especially on a TV show. Watching the show come together season after season, every choice the actor makes influences the story moving forward, and it can lead to interesting character changes and evolution. Hence, TV show Carol.

In comics, well... artists can do that. Artists can inspire the writer with how they draw a character for sure. Would Negan have been nearly as cool if Charlie Adlard had drawn him with a top hat and a monocle? But when a bull-headed writer wants to do something with a character, it's hard to change course.

So yeah, Carol was meant to represent a character at their breaking point, utterly broken by the world of THE WALKING DEAD. The trauma was too much for her to overcome unlike her television counterpart.

Let's actually start in the bottom right section of the plot. See that big column of text? That Carol and Lori conversation? I wrote that first. That's why it's crammed over to the right, so I'll have enough room for the plot when I get to it. When a scene comes together in my head, I often try to jot it all down so I don't forget. Then I'll plot the whole issue around that. At the bottom, it says: "(reference to Lori's criticism.)" It took me a second to figure that out, too.

All right. Let's dive in.

PAGE NOTES:

1: This was planned as the opening, but as you can see, I added a note above it so that the scene would better connect to the end of the previous issue. Another trick I lifted from my hero Erik Larsen was making the ends of issues and the beginning of the following issues seamless so they can be put together in collections and flow together nicely.

2-5: Kind of crazy how all this lines up perfectly with the final script. No adjustments made.

6-9: More plot by the numbers. Pretty seamless transition from plot to script.

10: This transition would be handled better these days. I might have made Rick's "They did what?!" a full-page splash of his face to make the transition clearer. When I was rereading it, I wondered if we'd messed up by having Glenn in two scenes, the time jump wasn't clear. Oh, well... live and learn!

13: I really was never interested in dealing with the cause of the zombie outbreak. My opinion has been well-documented, but the short version is... any detailed explanation would push things too far into the realm of sci-fi for me. I think it's better to leave it unresolved. That way, the story remains grounded. THAT SAID... Tons of fans wanted me to explore it, and I was NOT above pandering to them from time to time in ways I felt were interesting.

14-16: Things getting moved around a lot here.

17: The Carol seduces Billy scene was cut to one page, which gave me room to have Dale get his hat back. As I recall, I think Charlie had him lose the hat when he was attacked near the cars. I just couldn't have Dale not get it back, hence this scene.

19: Who doesn't love a good "comic characters playing sports" scene?

20: Obviously, I thought it better to have Dale just sitting alone, brooding.

21: This dialogue was tweaked from the plot, but the gist is here.

22: To be clear... this was never intended to be Amber... you know... the character from INVINCIBLE? I guess... is who I was thinking of when I accidentally wrote Amber here. Look... nobody's perfect.

ISSUE 42

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD (42)

DATE

Oh, it's just another one of those quiet aftermath issues where we check in on all the characters and see what's going on in their lives, and AAAAAHHHHH look at that last page. Oh, dear... is this my one gag? This is basically the same structure of the INVINCIBLE series pilot I wrote and almost every other thing I've done at some point. Am I a hack? Do I really only have one gag? Oh, well... it's an effective gag, right? Right?

Am I too revealing of my own insecurities in these things? I think I'm probably getting too comfortable thinking people don't really read these big chunks of text hidden in the back of these issues. Are you reading this? Hello? I mean, I know SOME of you do, and I love you the most, to be sure. One of the exciting aspects of digital comics would be getting the data of who actually reads these pages; what percentage of readers are actually getting this deep in the book before they switch over to something else. Sadly, that's just a limitation of print. 5% or less of readers could ever look at this page, and we'd just... never... know.

But honestly, that's kind of the fun of it for me, too. Doing things like this for the "cool" people. You reading this? You're cool. I like you way more than the fans who don't read this. They suck.

Anyway, the issue where the Governor launches his attack at the end – what fun. Let's dive into this plot.

First off, up in the top right... another line from NEGAN trying to creep into this book. That was something for the "you can have sex with Tyreese" Dale/Andrea scene (that was plotted a few issues ago and kept getting bumped, if you'll recall), and in the end, I thankfully realized this line was just too crass for Dale. If only there was a character in this book that could say any harsh, crass, offensive thing I could think of, and it would be in character... if only... oh, well...

I guess we'll just have to wait another 58 issues for that character to come along and (in some peoples' opinions) ruin the book.

You'll see in the bottom right corner, a tiny list of scenes for this issue. Number 5: "Andrea upset over shooting a man" didn't quite make it in. I feel like I kept meaning to deal with Andrea grappling with the difference between shooting a zombie and shooting the man from Woodbury outside the Wal-Mart, and there was just never a good time. By now, it just seemed like too many things had happened to go back to her dealing with that.

Also, while I'm here. Tyreese has some HARSH words for victims of suicide in this issue, and I just want to remind people that when a character in a book says something, it's almost never the actual opinion of the writer coming through. In an attempt to make the characters as unique as possible, writers will often write characters with opinions that directly conflict against their own. It always drives me nuts to see people online equating something a fictional character says with a writer's opinion. Especially when there's often another character written by that same writer presenting the opposite argument. Anyway, don't do that. Suicide is always a tragedy.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Like the plot for last issue, I was mistakenly writing Amber instead of Carol. I was writing a lot of books at the time, and man... it's hard to keep these characters' names straight sometimes.

2-5: All pretty much exactly as plotted. Didn't originally plan for Andrea to be the one to shoot zombie Carol. That's why the later Andrea scene shifted to cover that, instead of Andrea shooting the guy from Woodbury.

6-7: These two scenes were flipped in order. Unfortunately, these two pages are basically just to run through reactions to Carol's death before we move on to build up to the final page.

8: Time passes. "It's sad but life goes on" is a pretty harsh thing to say two weeks after someone dies, but less than 10 PAGES later, man... that's harsh, Rick. Such an abrupt time jump, but y'know... I had things I had to get to, so...

10-11: I ultimately decided to make it a little more ambiguous what Andrea and Tyreese were doing. Better to make it a surprise than show them making Dale's new leg here.

12-17: These scenes are all pretty much as plotted. No real changes along the way here.

18: Harvesting crops becomes basketball! I should have had more basketball scenes... that should have been our "X-Men playing basketball" stuff. I don't think there was ever a single basketball scene in the tv show. That's a real shame. Or am I just not remembering? That's possible. "All got guns." was just something for me to note since I knew the attack was going to be happening immediately after this scene.

19: I had an uncle who would eat tomatoes like this, and I always thought it was weird. Seemed like as good a scene as any to kill time leading up to the final moment of this page.

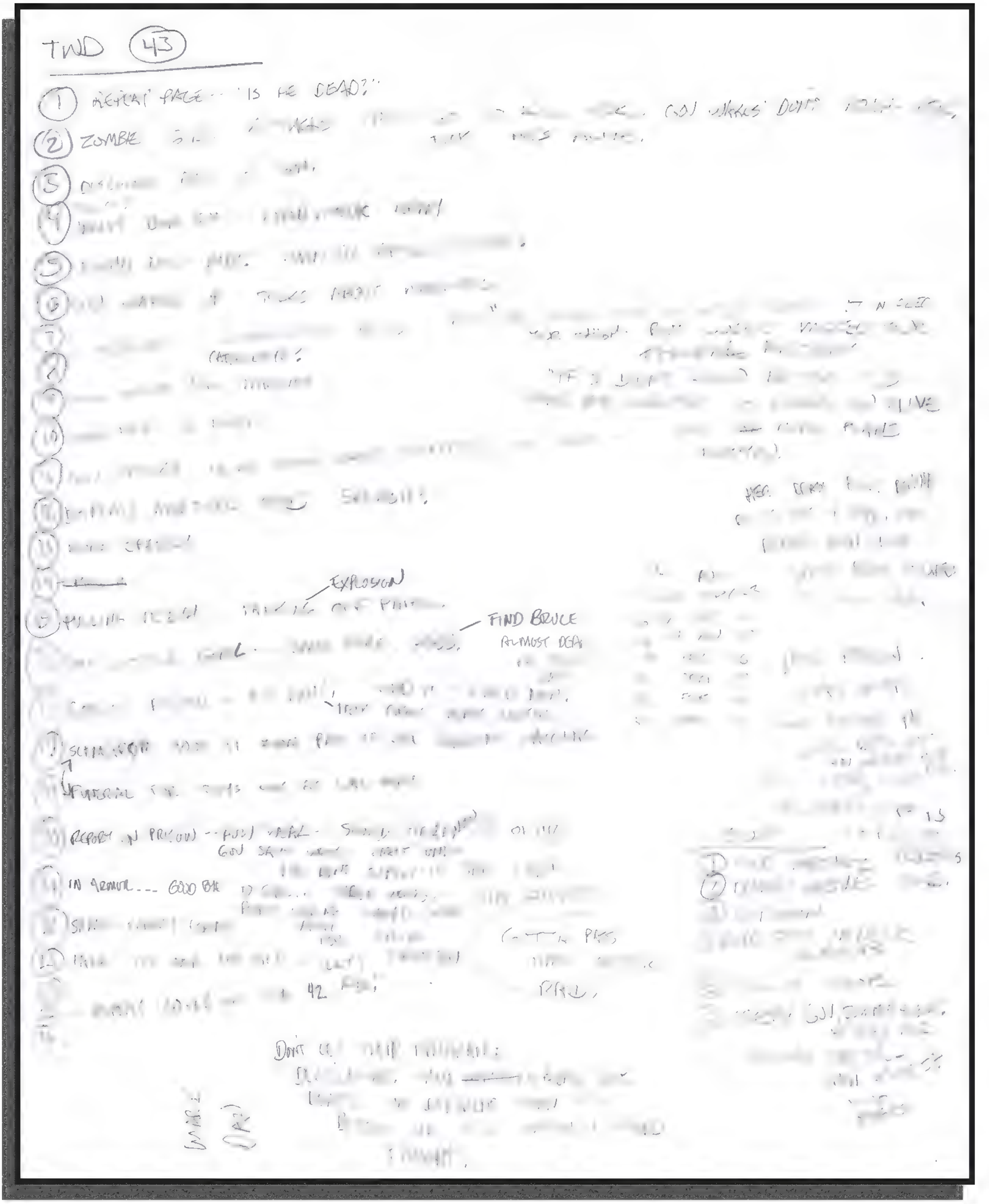
20-21: I think I originally planned to have them lined up ready to attack, and then Rick and crew would just notice them. Then I realized that was weird.

22: Should I have kept the megaphone for this bit? Maybe. I think it's funny that Rick and crew, and even the Governor's own men, most likely can't hear this command at all. Also, spoiler alert, so proud we got to use this splash cliffhanger moment TWICE!

ISSUE 43

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Oh, boy... this issue. Man... what an issue. I'm a huge fan of time gap stories. I guess you could really say this is a prequel issue, as it sets up the events leading to the big attack on the prison that technically started in the previous issue. It's just a lot of fun as a writer to sit down and find all the gaps, all the nooks and crannies, where the timelines could line up, and things can make sense. When did the Wal-Mart fight take place from the Woodbury perspective? Things like that. It's a fun puzzle to put together.

Toward the bottom of the page, you'll see the "STUFF" header. That was probably written first. That's the stuff I needed to handle. You'll notice item 4 didn't make it into the issue. Poor "dude shot in neck" never had a chance. Also, that's Bruce, I just didn't remember his name at the time. I guess he did technically survive long enough to reveal Glenn was there. So I guess item 4 did make it into the issue, kind of.

Above that, you'll see some months and some issue numbers. This was me trying to work out a schedule to get ahead. I'd always dreamed of doing two issues a month for a while to get a nice buffer in the shipping schedule. Little did I know, as time went on, and especially after we brought on Stefano Gaudiano, there were times when we were nearly a year ahead of schedule toward the end of the series. And all because Charlie Adlard was a voracious script gobbling machine, he was always drawing this series faster than I could write it. I was always playing catch up to him. In fact, I'd wager this was me trying to plan to write two issues a month so I could keep up with him for a while.

SPOILER WARNING: On the right edge of the page, you'll see "Her(shel) drags Billy behind. Billy shot in head, stops. Breaks down. Cries. Waits. Begs soldiers to kill him." That doesn't happen until issue №46 or so. I just had the idea and jotted it down here, so I didn't forget it.

SPOILER WARNING (but not really, it doesn't happen): Below that, we see "Governor after he WINS. Guts out. Gov watches him die. Gov: 'looks like all that's left is to pick out the drapes.'" So at this point, I was thinking the Governor would succeed! And whose guts were out while the Governor watched them die? I'm going to assume Hershel, that this was a continuation of the first thought. The original plan was to leave the Governor alive in the prison during that time while our characters were all dispersed into the area around the prison. I think I'd even considered having there be a rematch for the prison. In the end, I thankfully realized that would be repetitious, and I came up with the plan to have the battle destroy the prison so the characters could move on. (Creating what some people thought was a never-ending repetitious loop of the characters finding a place, losing it, and finding another... but that didn't last the full series, critics! And each one was different! And the characters grew along the way, which is what is important! I'm not defensive. What?!)

Sideways at the bottom, you'll see "Mark Dad" so maybe at some point this piece of paper was going to be used for INVINCIBLE?

PAGE NOTES:

1-2: All pretty much by the numbers. No changes here.

3: "Discover Doc is gone" got changed to mention that Doc is dead.

4: Yes, that was me correcting myself on the spelling of "enlist" without using my eraser... I don't know why I do the things I do either. Was Bob always planned to be an army medic? Or was this a last-minute change to make it more believable that the Governor survived? Kind of. It was a last-minute change that took place in issue №33. That's why I made it a point to show Bob outside the Governor's door when Michonne broke in to attack. The three original Governor novels, co-written with the fantastic Jay Bonansinga, actually delve more into the Woodbury characters in-depth, and I know there's a lot more done with Bob in particular. The third novel even features the prison attack from the perspective of the Woodbury people. Those were fun books.

5: Decided to focus more on Bob fixing the Governor here. Priorities. This would just play out in dialogue.

7-8: "character bits catheter?" is pretty hilarious (and yeah, I don't know how to spell catheter. I'm not a nurse. It could have been with a "D." Leave me alone). This was all moved to page 7, page 8 was used to basically get us to where page 10 is in the plot.

9: In the end, I decided not to do a lot of cutaways from the Governor, at least in this first half of the issue. We didn't really need to SEE the characters find Martinez's body.

11: Moved up to page 9.

12: Moved up to page 10.

13: Moved up to page 11. Man... I'm making room for SOMETHING... what could it be?

14: Just left this blank so that I could add things as I went. By this point, I knew the issue was going to be moving around a bit in script form, so I was leaving room for myself.

15-16: Okay... the teeth removal and kissing scene. At this point, I needed something big, I needed something memorable, I needed something NEW to add to the Governor lore, to Penny, to the fish tanks full of heads. I knew there had to be something that could happen in this issue that would be a big, memorable turn. And THIS is what I came up with. Sorry. Maybe it crosses a line? All that said, it certainly accomplished what I wanted to with the scene... it's memorable! This scene was moved up, and I added a page of the Governor vomiting... that's using that extra space wisely, Robert!

17: You could say this was cut, or some of it kind of became page 12 in the issue.

18: Oddly enough, this actually stayed at page 18.

19: Funeral for the Wal-Mart victims became just discovering them, and Bruce revealing it was Glenn and the rest with his dying breath.

Circled, center bottom: "Gotta pass time after raid." That's when I realized more time passed after the Wal-Mart attack and the prison attack, so I had to build that in. That led to me going back and rearranging the issue.

20: This became page 19.

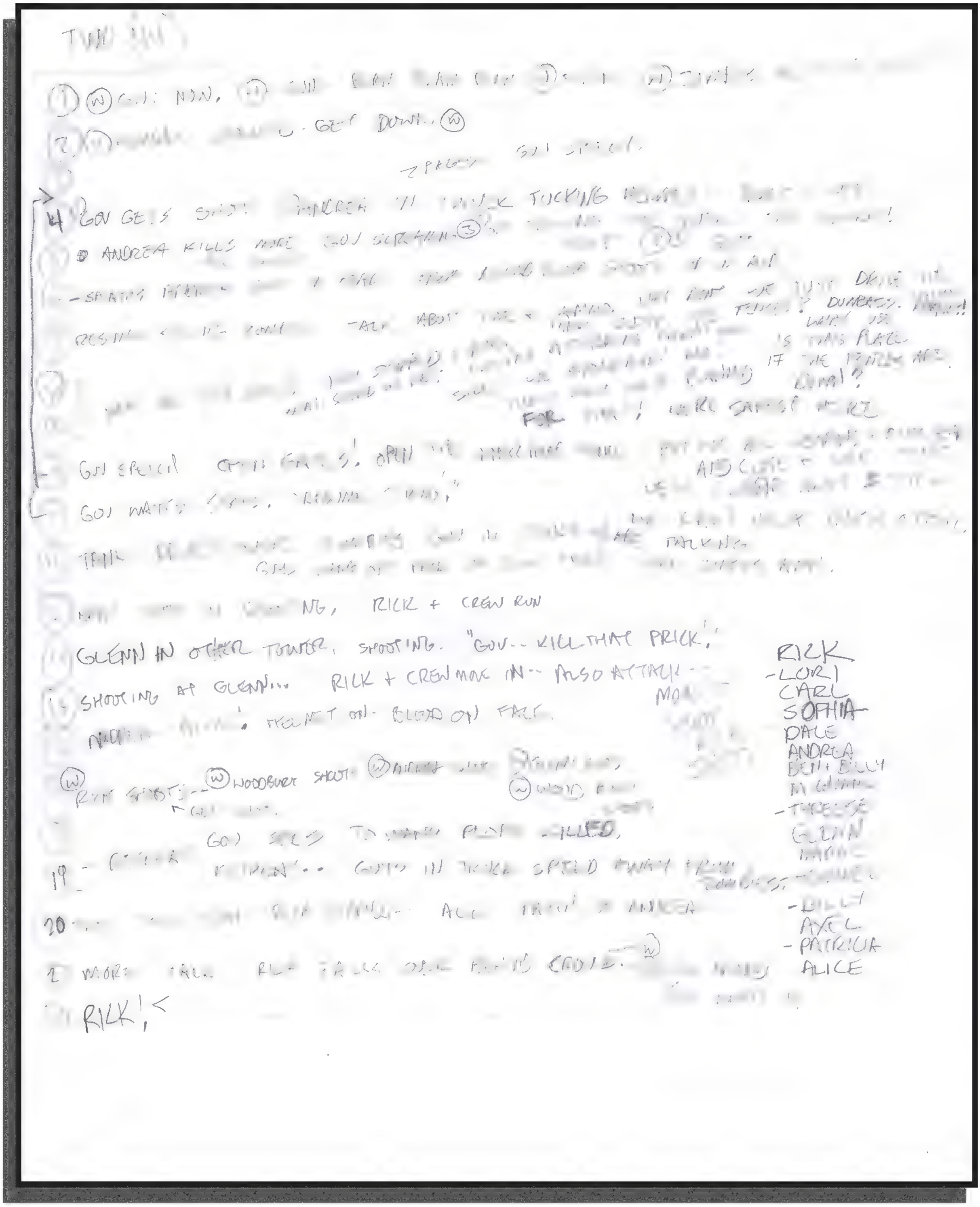
21: This became page 20. Kind of. The Governor in armor talking to his people is still page 21, the other part of the page became 20.

22-26: And this never changed. And yes, we reused pages in this issue, but that's why it's 26 pages! We still did 22 new pages for the issue. We weren't looking to shortchange anyone!

ISSUE 44

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



This was quite the action extravaganza. This series, for me at least, was always about the emotional trauma of the zombie apocalypse. It was about characters dealing with grief and being changed by surviving this world. It was never really an action comic. So, when issues like this (and the next five or so) cropped up, it was always a pleasure to see just how well Charlie Adlard handled the shifting gears of this series.

I mean, man... look at this issue. So cool. So many amazing dynamic panels. Great stuff.

As you'll see in the bottom right-hand corner of the page, the character checklist is back. It was always a struggle to manage the cast of this series. Especially for this run, where they were all active and all contained within the prison. I mean, I'm human. It never happened (to the best of my knowledge), but it's totally possible to forget characters and leave them out of an issue by mistake.

I promise whenever a character was left out of an issue, it was always deliberate.

Those little tick marks you see next to the names: Lori, Tyreese, Hershel, Billy, Patricia. I think I was noting characters I needed a beat for? I think. So, while I was plotting, I'd look at the list and say, "Gotta mention this person somehow," and then figure it out.

This plot is packed. Definitely another one of those issues where I had a lot of plot, and had to fit it into the issue. I don't know if everyone realizes this, but action is one of the hardest things to do in comics because it's so reliant on motion to tell the story, and in comics, all you have is still images. So it takes a TON of panels to do action properly. So, if you're not careful, an action sequence can eat up pages in no time at all. So it's always a struggle to distill images into single panels that will best tell the story while not taking up too much space.

Up until about 30 years ago, this would have been handled by the artist entirely. A writer would write simple plots (or dictate them over the phone), and the artist, to varying degrees, would run wild, completely in control of how many pages each scene would be and how many panels were on each page.

I've done comics that way before too, and it's quite fun and rewarding. In the end, though, it feels a little lazy (for me at least), and I do prefer controlling those page turns myself.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Is this the closest a plot has been to the final page yet? Maybe.

3: You can see this is blank, but to the right it says, "2 pages - Gov speech". I'd already plotted to page 9, so I plotted these pages in the 10 and 11 slot and then drew that arrow to move them up.

4: This becomes page 6. And each page after this slides down two pages.

6: Originally, I'd pictured Andrea's headshot fake-out from behind, so the blood shooting at you would obscure it. In the end, I wanted people to think she was dead, but I didn't want it to be unbelievable that she was grazed. So Charlie and I opted for the forehead graze being on the opposite side of the head and for the shot to have VERY little blood.

8-9: Notice how it's just dialogue here. Just jotting down what people are saying as fast as possible. I know they'd be pinned down, so I was just trying to capture the conversation before I forgot it. Dictating actions here wasn't needed.

12: I worry I did this "pied piper" bit three different times in this series. I know I did it at least twice. Not as embarrassing as duplicating the "little pig, little pig, let me in" gag twice, which will come up later... spoilers.

13: Poor Axel getting shot was just added at the last minute in the script stage, it seems.

16: It's entirely possible that I wanted this to be a splash page, but in the end, just didn't have the room.

17: Notice "Rick shoots--gets shot". You can even SEE Rick getting shot on this page, although Charlie did a BRILLIANT job of having it there but not drawing attention to it. He's even holding his wound on page 19 in the final panel, and I bet you STILL didn't notice this. Also, he's oddly not present in the story from this point on, clearly preoccupied with the whole getting shot thing.

18-19: "Retreat" was shorthand, and all the business with the Governor punching his guy was added in the script.

20: "Rick stands" Didn't want to tip things off, so kept Rick off this page entirely in the end.

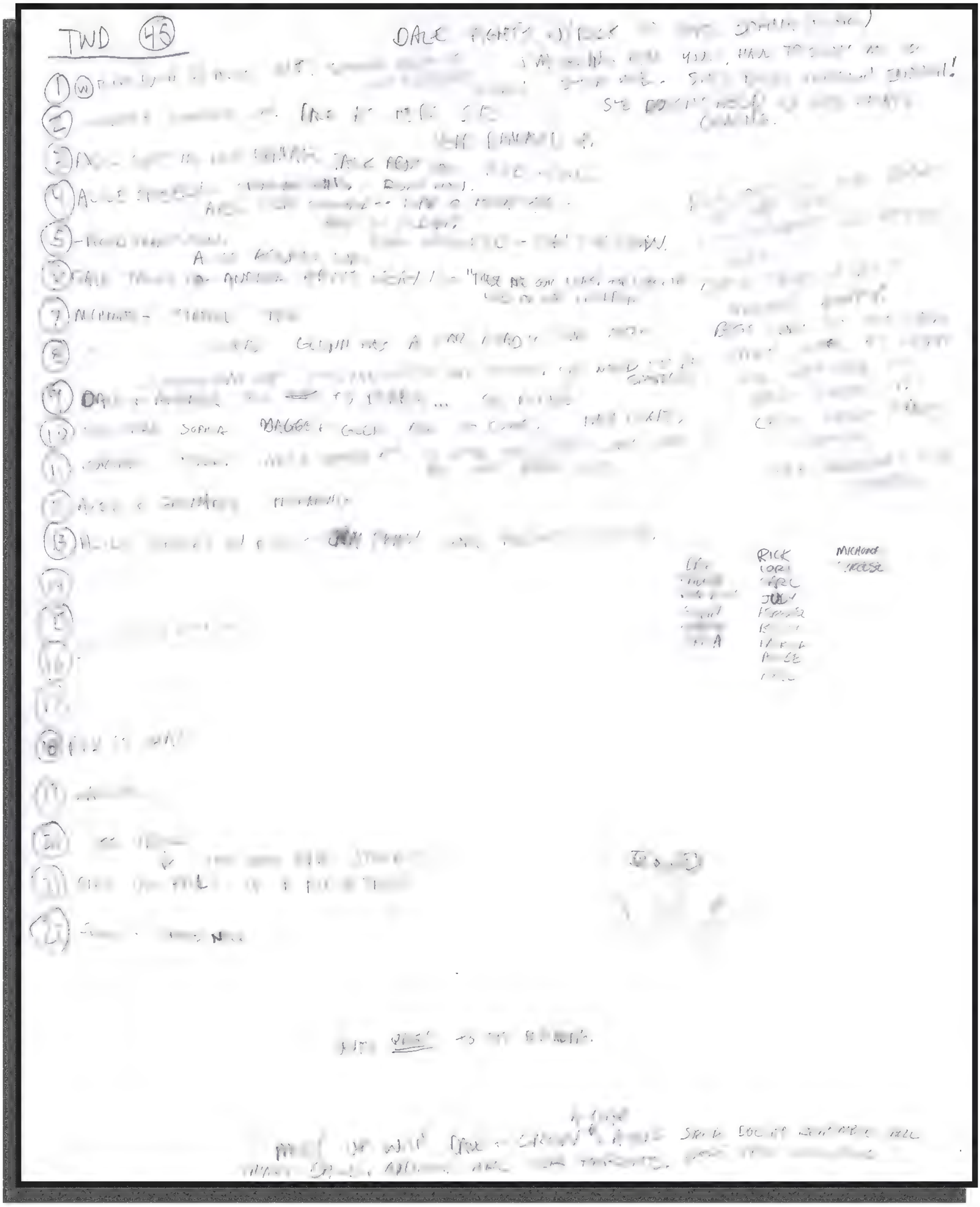
21: Silly Robert, having Rick fall to the ground on page 21 would spoil the page turn! Thankfully cooler heads prevailed in the final version.

22: Clearly, I knew what to do here just from "RICK!" Heh.

ISSUE 45

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Okay, well, this is a cool break-in-the-action (for the most part) issue. I'm mostly taken with the emotional flip-flopping toward the end of the issue. Rick's awake! Hooray! Everything's going to be okay! Oh, wait, everyone's gone. They're screwed. Tyreese is taken captive... and Michonne is DEAD?

Holy crap.

Look, these things are quite spoilery. I don't know how to even manage these entries and avoid that. I don't want to go into my notes and erase all the future turns because it's cool to see what I was making notes of, and WHEN I was making them. At some point in these, you'll see me making notes about the end of the series, YEARS before that was even considered. So, if I haven't said it enough before if you're reading this book for the first time in this form (which is awesome, and I love that) please don't read these entries until MUCH later.

Okay... so this plot is a mess, top-heavy with a bunch of BIG gaps. How cool is that? Tight little character list on the middle right. No tick marks this time.

Weird face drawn at the bottom. That usually means, "Robert got a call while plotting."

Big spoiler at the bottom: "Denote PAGES to Tys beheading." What's really funny about that to me, is that abbreviating names is a huge pet peeve of mine. Standard abbreviations are cool, those are acceptable to me. Jonathan to Jon, cool. Robert to Rob, I don't prefer it, but if it makes you happy, cool. No issue with those. If your name is Brian and you prefer to go by Bri... we're not going to be friends. I can't get past it. So, in my HASTE to write this notion down before I forgot it... I wrote "TYs" instead of "Tyreese's", and I want you to know dear reader, it's driving me NUTS. So much so, that I devoted a whole paragraph to that without even acknowledging that the real subject here is the eventual beheading of one of my FAVORITE characters. I really didn't want to kill that guy... more on that... when it actually happens. Spoiler alert...

And at the bottom, yes, I didn't stick to the "A YEAR" I added there, but I think all the rest of that came to pass, even Dale's long-ish hair.

Oh, before we dive into page notes. At the top of the page: Dale fights w/Rick to take Sophia (and Carl). I think this was written before I realized Rick was shot last issue. The things across the top of the plot are usually written before anything. And by this point, this was the first storyline that was written to be a full six-part story, the siege of the prison. This is around the time I started laying out the plots in six-part chunks, so I'd do all the numbering on all six plots all at once, and this part at the top might have been written before issue №44 was written, or any of the covers were done.

All that to the right, below the unused Rick and Dale dialogue, would have been written first. That's a rough plot for the whole issue there. And my... god... second instance of "Ty." Ooof. Look, I have DUMB pet peeves that make no sense. I'm not saying if your name is Ty, you're making a poor life choice or something... it just makes me twitch a little. No one is normal. We all have our issues. Most of them are dumb. Mine are dumber than yours.

PAGE NOTES:

1-3: All pretty much as written.

4: Don't remember why I got rid of this Axel beat and changed it to Patricia. Maybe just to keep Patricia active in the story, somewhat. Miss the Axel offended bit, though. Oh, well.

5: Skipped doing a transfusion scene to just doing an after-the-transfusion scene.

9: Heh. Another instance of me saying Debbie (from INVINCIBLE) instead of Lori (from this book). Ah... I knew what I meant! Not all dark-haired mothers in my books are interchangeable! These two are VERY different!

10: This plot really is very close to the final issue.

11: See?

12-13: Well, this became a spread. What was meant to be two different scenes, on two separate pages, became something that more efficiently tells those stories in a more visually interesting way. Two-page spreads are the best!

14-17: Was able to shave a page off this sequence when I actually wrote it out.

18: Used the new page 17 to build to this moment instead of it being an abrupt page turn after the Tyreese and Michonne attack. Works much better.

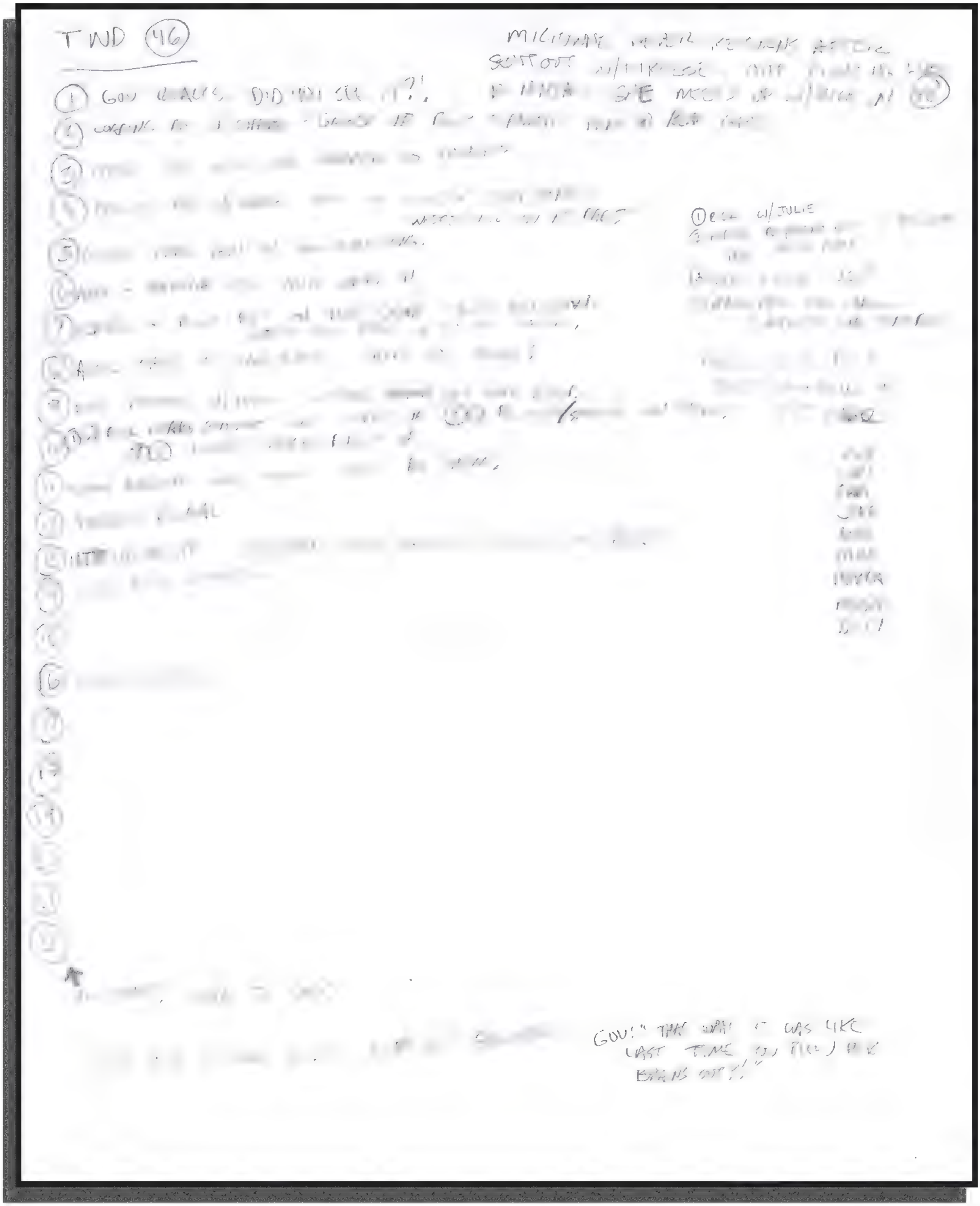
20: See truck? What's happening here?! This was clearly changed to Rick having his moment of doubt.

21-22: And look at that... a totally different ending was planned here! I decided to slow this moment down and save it for next issue. Rather than surprising the reader with the captive Tyreese already in danger, I opted to do the Michonne bit instead to make things feel far more dire leading into the next issue. Was what I have in the plot here a stronger ending? Most definitely. But I think holding it for next issue makes it an infinitely better issue, so I sacrificed a LITTLE here to get a LOT there. At least... I hope I did!

ISSUE 46

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Talk about lows to highs. To go from the gruesome death of Tyreese in the middle of the issue to the hopefully triumphant final page is quite a bit of whiplash... in a good way... I think. Is this the *Empire Strikes Back* chapter of this story? Or really... every chapter, including the final one, is the *Empire Strikes Back* chapter. Such a relentlessly sad bunch of issues. How did this comic become so indisputably popular? You guys are a dark bunch!

I remember wanting to make Tyreese's death sequence unrelentingly brutal. For me, that means lots of pages. Lots of detail and really letting Charlie get lost in the weeds of showing every nook and cranny of the scene. Nowadays, that might be a 6-page sequence, maybe even 8... so when I was rereading this issue, I thought, "here it comes," and then... it's over in THREE pages. THREE?! That's nuts... and yeah, another writer might see this and say, "Yeah, three pages is the most you could squeeze out of that moment", and maybe they're right.

It makes me think maybe I've gotten a little self-indulgent with my work. Honestly, this process of going back and analyzing this series has been a real eye-opener showing me things I used to do in my writing and reminding me of some starting points in my evolution as a writer. There are some things I definitely want to try and bring back and other things I look back on and cringe. I'll try not to point ALL those out because y'know... I do still want you to enjoy this series.

Although for some issues, like this one in particular, enjoy isn't exactly the right word.

Okay, this plot. Look at that thing over there. BIG note to myself in the top right-hand corner. That was the gist of my plan, although if memory serves, it was a few issues later than that when Michonne finally meets up with Rick.

Below that, we see a numbered list of scenes I wanted in this issue. A moment between Rick and Julie was important for... reasons. Axel and Alice sex?! That became Patricia, which made a little more sense. Then there was the customary list of characters, so I didn't forget anyone. Never mind that I'm sure I forgot a few characters here and there in these lists.

PAGE NOTES:

1: It's a cool bit of business that the sword is brought in to "prove" Michonne is dead. If anyone was thinking the last cliffhanger was a fake-out, maybe there's a little less doubt after this page.

3: Not a lot needed to be written down in advance of writing these logistics pages where characters just lay out plans.

4: So far, this plot is very close to the final issue... but man, there's a lot of white space down there at the end!

5: I sat here for ten minutes trying to figure out what "Oh... one more thing." would be AFTER Rick gave Carl the gun. It was a real mystery to me, and it was frustrating that I didn't remember enough to be able to explain it to you guys. Like... what was the one more thing Rick was going to say to Carl AFTER he gave him the gun? Then I realized that's what the page starts with, and the one more thing IS the gun. I'm sure I had the idea for that dialogue after writing out "Gives Carl Gun", and back then, I know it opened the page, but man... this was an adventure for me that I have really typed a lot of words about, and I don't know that it's really worth all this.

9: Probably would have given this moment more pages these days, too, just to really milk the emotion out of it. Does it work as one page? Totally. But man, I feel like I could have done a lot more with Rick hanging out with his brand-new baby daughter if I'd given it more pages.

10: My plots look more like this more often these days. Breaking down into panels. If I know how to break a page down at this stage, I need to jot it down so I have it handy later. Otherwise, I get to the scripting stage and think, "I know I had a good panel break down for this but I forgot it!"

11: The dialogue on this page describing what the truck is doing is a bit much, but you can't argue that it doesn't get the job done. I just couldn't bring myself to have Charlie draw multiple panels of the truck getting in the perfect position.

14: "Hack piece of neck..." Yeesh. This is brutal. I knew I wanted to have this go for multiple pages as the Governor, with one arm, is not really able to effectively use Michonne's sword.

From this point on, yeah... the plot's kind of blank. I knew page 15 would be more hacking. And 16, "head severed" yeah... got that.

From that point on, I just ran with it. I probably knew page 18 would be that splash and didn't even bother to write it down. Sometimes to save time, I'd just type it in my script template. I work from a template in my word document, so I can just zip down to page 18 and write it up if I want. So that's what happened here. Why bother writing it all on paper when I know it. Let's just type it now and save time.

Important to note: page 22... that was just an OPTION. I was willing to find the ending as I wrote. And clearly, I thought she'd get her sword back by the final page and didn't end up doing that at all.

To wrap up at the bottom, a final note for issue №47 which spoils things for next issue. I knew I wanted to have that line, so again, I had to jot it down here to keep from forgetting.

ISSUE 47

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD (47)

(1) MICHONNE [illegible]

(2) M[illegible] GET [illegible]

(3) THAT WHAT IS [illegible]

(4) RICK + CARL

(5) STUFF

(6) SPLASH.. ATTACK STARTS

(7) WOODBURY ATTACKS ZOMBIES.

(8) AIELS HEAD [illegible]

(9)

(10) PATRICIA DIES SHOT AS [illegible]

(11) [illegible]

(12) [illegible] THIS IS [illegible]

(13) [illegible]

(14) SPAW [illegible]

(15)

(16) TIM [illegible]!

(17)

(18) BU[illegible] SHIT

(19) [illegible]

(20)

(21) RICK [illegible] + CARL [illegible]

(22) SHOT [illegible]

RICK

JUDY

ALICE

CA

TWI

Okay, now things are starting to get crazy, or were they already? Yeah, I guess they were. This really did become the defining arc of the book for a good long time. So much happened in so few issues, looking back, it probably was the catapult that launched us to issue №100. It really re-established that feeling of "anything could happen" in this book.

I mean... poor Axel. So casual a death, lost in the chaos. I still miss him to this day. I really loved that character.

The plot for this issue actually has some big changes, mostly things getting pushed to next issue, but it's fun to look back and see how loosely this issue was plotted, and then as I was scripting, I'd just change things on the fly as I followed the energy of the issue.

My writing process is, I guess, pretty step heavy. I've often said ,"I don't do second drafts." It's kind of true. When I get done typing a comic script, I don't even reread them, I just send them to the artist. I know that can seem lazy, but I never really see those documents as something that will ever be seen by the public. An editor doesn't read them. A publisher doesn't approve them. To me, they're little more than an email between writer and artist. If there's something the artist has a question on, they'll email or call me, and we'll work it out.

The thing is though, this is really a third draft by the time the script is written. I keep scenes in my head and work them out. I'll jot down notes for scenes, as you see sometimes in the margins of these plots, or I'll write them in a notebook, or the notepad on my phone. So that's kind of draft one. Then I do these plots, where I order the scenes I've worked out, scrawl out temp dialogue, and make sure the structure is all there. Then comes the script where I spend the most time, really. Sometimes things change from the plot, sometimes drastically, other times they don't change at all, but things are refined along the way. Lastly, which is kind of the most important step, once the pages are drawn, I go in and review the dialogue before lettering. This stage is very much like the editing stage in TV and movies. I can change scenes entirely, tweak, add or delete dialogue, and really put a final polish on things.

Anyway, I don't think this way of doing things is unique or anything, but I guess as I'm looking back and analyzing things, I realize I actually do quite a number of drafts in my comic writing process.

Let's dive in.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Right off the bat... this page is FOUR panels. Not three. See how different this plot is? Sheesh.

2-3: Clearly this is another instance where I knew what this scene was and just wrote a shorthand in the plot.

4-5: Rick and Carl was moved to 5 (and 6), and the scene with Lori was added here. No CLUE why I'd be trying to shoehorn more scenes between Lori and Rick into the book. And really... there's a bit of tragedy in the fact that their relationship is at such a low right now.

6: Here's where things start to pile up. This attack is moved back to page 6. Instead there's more prep and build up on page 7 that wasn't planned. The Carl scene was important and expanded. What was on page 7 is a good bit of business and a nice check in on Axel before he dies, but it was more or less added to keep the attack on an even-numbered page turn.

8: This gets bumped to 10, and his head doesn't really EXPLODE.

9: I do purposefully leave holes to be filled when I get the sense that things will be changing while plotting.

10: This is lost entirely. Moved back an issue (spoilers). Aside from the Patricia death, the rest of this page makes it in the issue. And that more or less gets this plot caught up with where the issue was.

12: This was meant to be a splash of the explosion, but the crossed out/moved down section got crammed onto this page to save space.

13: Was this guy's name Bruce? Sometimes... just sometimes... I don't mention the characters' names enough in the dialogue (sometimes I do it too often!).

14: Smoking pistol becomes firing pistol because... cooler?

15-16: Added some action business with Andrea here and... RIP the RV. If I had it to do all over again, I maybe would have given it a bigger moment. I mean... that was an important vehicle to the story. Oh well...

Also, tank through fence gets changed to pages 18 and 19 for a big spread. MAN, I'm eating up all the room at the end of this issue!

18: Billy shot... well, next issue must have been very easy to plot since I moved all of this back.

19: Very sorry to anyone reading alone for the first time and checking these pages out as they go. Big spoilers here.

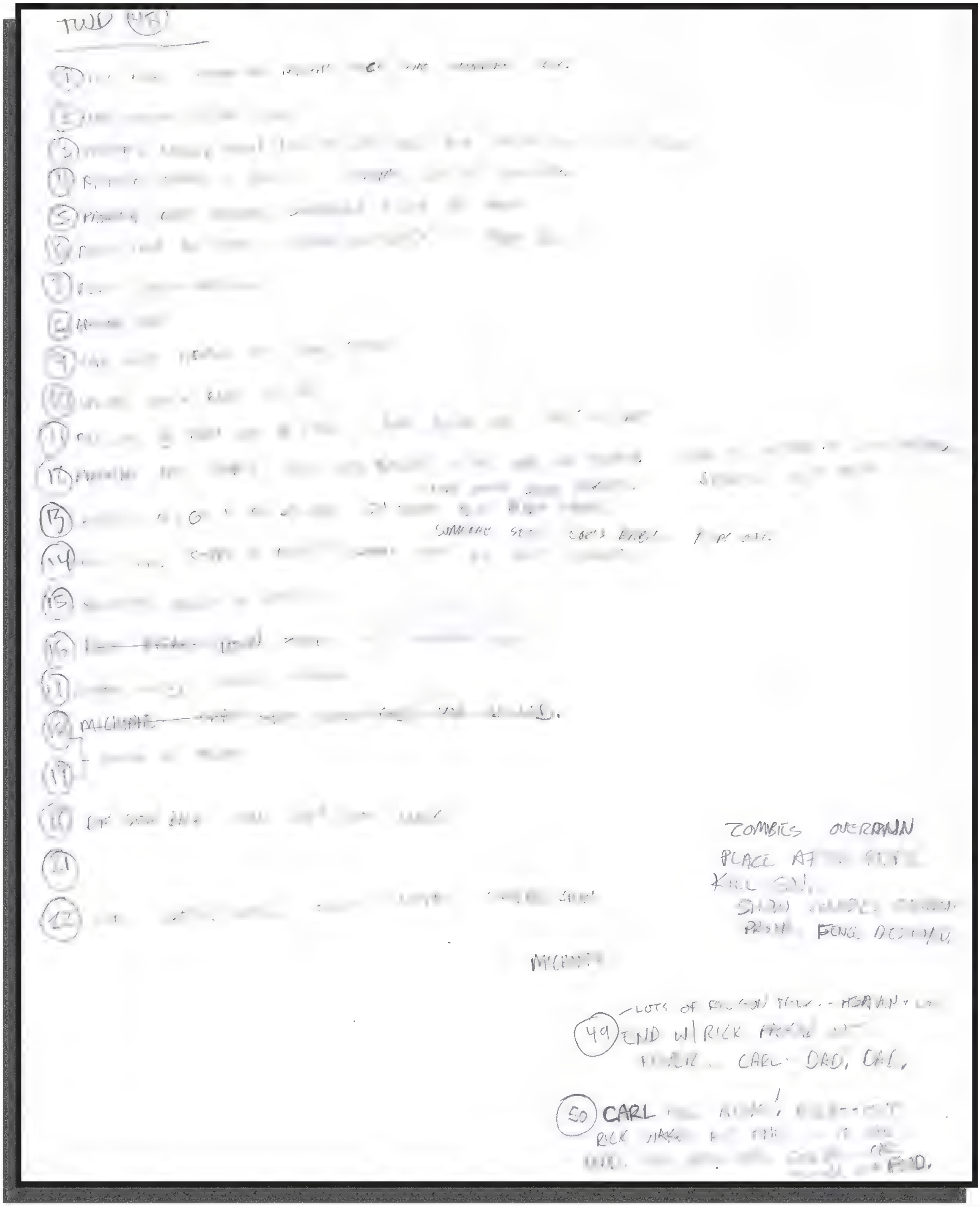
21-22: I honestly don't know what next issue would have been, if all of this had been crammed into this issue. I'm sure I had a plan, but yeah... would have been MUCH different. In the end, I decided to do the fake-out cliffhanger that we have. Which is cheap, sure... but considering what follows it, I figured it was worth it.

Final thing to note... the character list in the top right corner, those tick marks next to the names were characters that were meant to die this issue... well, that's a lot. Sheesh. (Two sheeshs in one entry... is that a record?)

ISSUE 48

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



At this point, the series had been running over four years. Which, at the time, seemed like a long time (heh). I mean, 48 is a big number. Most series these days (sadly) don't make it that long for a various number of short-sighted, industry-damaging reasons... that I won't go into here. ANYWAY, I was worried people were starting to detect a pattern, or I was settling into one, or something. It felt like there was a big death every four to six issues or so. They were mostly spread out, and they really happened one at a time.

Also, after four years, the novelty of "Oh, man... characters can really DIE in this book" might be wearing off. I mean, it was the norm at this point rather than something unusual. So, how do I really spice things up? How do I keep people guessing? Well... what if there was a majorly explosive arc where a TON of people died, leading to a ton of people dying in ONE SINGLE ISSUE.

The idea was that most readers would think, "Okay, Tyreese is the big death this arc. That's enough." Then Axel dies in the following issue and it's like, "Okay... wow, that's more than usual but okay, we got Jim and Amy back-to-back... still nothing special." Then, in the following issue, Hershel, Billy, Patricia, Alice, the Governor, and the one-two punch of Lori and Judith all die?! Holy crap! I figured it would jolt readers into seeing this book in a different light, and really, looking back, it worked. It was around this arc that sales really jumped (after climbing consistently from issue 2 to then) and it really cemented this book as something special.

Not bad for the tail-end of a nearly 50-issue run.

Fun fact! The Governor originally died on a right-handed page, not a page turn. You'll see the plot of this issue changed quite a bit as I wrote it, and it got to a point where it was really, really hard to fit everything in. So, I had to compromise and have the Governor dying on a non-page turn page... which KILLED me. So much so, that when it came time to collect the issues into the TPB I was able to add two pages to the issue, on either side of the Governor's death, to get it on a page-turn. Now, all is right in the world.

In the bottom left-hand corner of the plot, we'll notice a few things: First, is the general plot of the issue. Just me jotting down how things end up at the prison when the story is done. Below that, we'll see rough plots for issues №49 and №50. Readers with a keen memory will note that issue №50 got a much better ending by the time I wrote it.

PAGE NOTES:

2: Last moment is right. That panel of the Grimes family embracing is heartbreaking if you know what's coming. Yeesh.

5: Sadly, the Patricia death STILL happens on a right-hand page. It's a real bummer, but I guess you just can't make every death a page-turn surprise.

6: Pretty by the numbers so far. This is another of those scenes where nowadays I'd have made this two or three pages to really milk the sorrow of a father dragging their dead son behind them. Would that be better or gratuitous is well... the struggle I deal with daily. Maybe my scenes are just far too long these days. Who knows.

7: In the writing of this page, I was able to add in more Woodbury people and their headspace, making them more human and less mindless attackers. I think it helped.

8: I think this is another brain fart on my end. Andrea was never meant to be shot. This is me just writing Andrea when it should say ALICE.

10: Yep... sometimes these plots contain the most matter-of-fact version of some really harrowing events... it's kind of funny and sad at the same time.

11-13: This is all pretty much as plotted.

14: So, this was MEANT to be the page-turn death of the Governor, but I needed to build to it more. So that sentence crammed in above this to the right, became this page. "Someone sees Lori's baby." That someone is Lilly Caul, a character that became a prominent main character in the Governor trilogy of novels I wrote with Jay Bonansinga. (Which I think ended up being FOUR books since Part Three was so long and was taking too long for me to do my part of--sorry, Jay). I do recommend those books if you want to see backstories for Lilly and Bob and know WAY MORE about the Governor himself. There's quite a bit more to his story. And fun easter eggs like the reveal of who left the "All dead, do not enter" sign outside the Wiltshire Estates.

15: Speech? Someone. This is just lazy, Robert. No speeches in this issue!

16: We're kind of off-the-rails at this point. We don't really do the zombies killing Woodbury folk. They get trapped in the prison, and then... well... maybe read those books.

17: We get to this eventually, but not here.

18-19: Before I added the two pages, we actually did catch up to the plot at this point, having this spread of the prison, overrun.

20-22: And then we're into our emotional ending with Rick and Carl. I played around with the timing of things a bit, but it's more or less as plotted. On page 22, it says "fight... scream..." I lost the scream, but Rick does struggle with Carl a little leading into the hug. We definitely end things on a low note this issue... but hey, that's most issues to some degree... this is just... quite an emotional low.

ISSUE 49
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD : 49

(1) (3) WIDE TYREESE HEAD-- SHADOW-- SWORD STUCK IN [illegible].
(2) SPLASH MICHONNE STANDS... (5) [illegible] (5) KNIFES TEAR.
(3) CHECKS RV--

(4) LEAVES-ANOTHER SPROUD OF [illegible] ONE [illegible] CLICK.

(6) CARL IS CRYING. TONGS HOLD CAN OVER FLAME SHIRT POT HOLDER.
CAN IN BACKPACK SHOT... LEAKED.
BACKPACK OPEN ON GROUND...
RICK: NEED TO GET A NEW HOLSTER.

(7) CARL [illegible] 'SHUT UP.' [illegible].

(8) RICK [illegible] SICK.

(9) [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] UNCOUNTED DOG

(10) AXE STUCK IN ZOMBIES [illegible] MAYBE [illegible] OF

(11) CARL

(12) [illegible]

(13) [illegible] WATER FROM [illegible] BOTTLE.
NEED [illegible] CONTAINERS GET [illegible].

(14) [illegible] SHED OF TOWN [illegible] PALE BURNING

CARL -- I MISS MOM.

(15) RICK IS PASSED OUT

(51) PHONE IN NEW AREA WORKS
[illegible]

Now, THIS is more like it. This might be the first modern Robert Kirkman issue. It's all mood and tone and pacing and emotion, with very little happening. Feels more like the comics I write these days. And really, all joking aside, I'm not saying it's a bad thing. I think one of my strengths as a writer, which also hurts me, is that I do both, often. I'll do breakneck-paced comics, and I'll do really methodically plotted comics. You never really know what you're going to get with me.

I feel like that's a good thing, because as I've discussed here many times, I value surprise above all else. But it also makes it hard for my audience to grow a familiarity with my work, or to have the comfort of always knowing what to expect from me, which can be a bad thing. All my books are somewhat different, and issue-to-issue, stories in the same series can be very different.

Case in point: following up the massive, action-packed fall of the prison storyline with a quiet, slow story mostly focusing on Carl and Rick... I mean, really... they mostly just walked to a house.

As you can see from the sparsely written plot to the left, I pretty much knew what this issue was going to be, and the plotting went quickly, and the writing went pretty quickly, too. I definitely had a solid idea of what I was doing here from the start.

In the bottom right-hand corner, you'll see a rough idea for issue №51. It's pretty close to where the issue ends up aside from one big thing that got cut. These little notes are a good example of how freely I was able to plot this series. I knew what I was doing in this chunk of issues. I had a far-reaching plan that I was working toward, but then I'd have an idea for something new, and I could easily slot it in without disrupting my plans too much. It was great.

PAGE NOTES:

1: The three panels became four panels when I realized I needed more panels to properly show Tyreese's zombified head looking around.

2: A panel was added for Michonne to pull her sword out of Tyreese's head.

3: She does check the RV but another zombie kill was added in.

4-5: Kind of a bummer that I didn't do this "final" spread of the prison. I think I rightly realized that Charlie had drawn MORE than enough prison spreads. More interesting to have Michonne looking through the RV to confirm Andrea got away... in some form.

6: Look at all that stuff. I had a complicated setup planned... using tongs to hold a can over the flame, using a shirt as a potholder to hold the tongs as the flame heated them up... would that have been interesting? Was I wrong to lose the leaking can that was shot in the backpack? Did Rick need a new holster? I don't even remember. It doesn't look like it. I opted instead to show how vulnerable Rick could be with his missing hand. He can't even open a can on his own.

8: I cut it entirely, but originally Carl was supposed to lash out at Rick more. In the end, I opted to save that for issue №50.

10-11: I was going to have them encounter a dog? Man... I wonder why I never did that. That would have been pretty cool. A stray dog can be even more dangerous than a zombie. Missed opportunity there.

12: "Maybe twists head off." This issue is FULL of missed opportunities.

13: "Carl?" Just "Carl" for this page?! Definitely an unfinished idea here...

15: All the way over to the right... really a shame I didn't do the toilet water scene. Man, what was I thinking?!

17-19: So the only real dialogue scene in this issue was more or less written off the top of my head. No plot to support it. "What are they doing here? Eh. I'll figure it out," is, I'm sure, what I was thinking at the time. I should have at least written "emotional stuff" in this plot for this section.

20: This got moved to page 21 in the script... no need to linger too long before that page turn at the end.

22: Yeah, Carl all alone. I thought that would be a nice way to one-up the downer of an ending to the previous issue. Good times!

ISSUE 50

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD (50)

(1) CARL REACTING TO RICK

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

(6) ZOMBIE [illegible] CARL [illegible]

(7) CLIMBS [illegible] GETS ZOMBIES TO [illegible]

(8) [illegible] ATTACK [illegible]

(9)

(10) PIC [illegible]

(11) KIDS [illegible]

(12) [illegible] SEE [illegible] TALK.

(13)

(14)

(15)

(16) PIC [illegible] AS [illegible]

CARL [illegible] IS [illegible]

(17) PIC [illegible] THROW [illegible]

(18)

(19) RICK [illegible] CARL [illegible]

[illegible] "I'M SCARED."

This has always been one of my favorite issues of THE WALKING DEAD. So much so that when it came time for this story to happen in the show, I got to write this story a second time! Fun. (I'm pretty sure the pudding was Scott Gimple's idea.)

This was a real turning point in the series for me, which is great with it being a big anniversary issue and all. Carl Grimes had always been a character in the book, but for the most part he was far in the background. He was young. He was a kid. Lots happened to him, but for the most part, he was always part of someone else's story. Even when he got shot, the story was more about Rick's son getting shot and how HE reacted than it was about Carl.

So, this issue was the beginning of Carl getting stories about him. Where he took charge and made decisions on his own, something that would carry on through to the very end of the series, and it all started here.

I loved Carl Grimes. I mean, it's bad to play favorites with the characters, but this poor kid, having to grow up in the zombie apocalypse, I just loved writing this character.

It was also fun doing an issue that focused solely on two characters, or really ONE, for the entire issue. After so much happened in the previous arc, we really stripped things down and got into some really deep-focused characterization here.

And we ended the issue on a two-page spread! When have we ever done that?! I don't think we ever did it again after this.

Unfortunately for this feature, well... the story never really changed much along the way. It was always a very simple, very contained Carl Grimes adventure... and just LOOK over on that facing page at that EMPTY plot! This thing practically wrote itself. I remember this issue being a breeze to write. I don't have those very often these days, if ever. I half-wrote this plot, just dove into the script, got this thing off to Charlie Adlard, and we were off to the races.

I believe this is one of the few issues in the run that Charlie got a FULL script on before he started drawing... but the less said about that... the better... for me... because it's embarrassing.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Yep. That's right. Carl reacting. Kicking things off with a bang.

2-5: And look at that gap. This was just Carl panicking over Rick being passed out. Easy! No need to map this out on paper before the typey type.

6: Well, look at that, maybe this wasn't going to be a splash page originally. Carl runs upstairs? Nah. Cut that. The idea was that he'd run upstairs and climb outside to better fool the zombies, and in the end, I just thought, "Eh... he'll just use the back door. That works."

7-10: Yes! This needed to be a four-page sequence! Was page 9 stalling a bit so that the zombie being behind him could be the page 10 page turn? Maybe a little! But I stand by it.

11: This got expanded to page 13. I wanted to make it more difficult for Carl to kill the zombies by himself. I feel like that was definitely better than him easily killing them all on one page.

12: Okay, this got pushed back, but look at the gap in the plot all the way to page 18. And the plot here ends with "starts the talk." I knew exactly what "the talk" was. This long rambling speech of how independent Carl now thinks he is, how confident he was, his anger over losing his mother, his sorrow, I knew all the ins and outs to the point where taking the time to jot it all down on paper would have just slowed me down.

By this point, I'd gotten to a new method of writing. Especially for long scenes like this. I work in a template, so all my panel descriptions are set, and there's a little window under each panel description for dialogue. It's just a .doc file I made for myself that I type all my scripts in, nothing fancy, but what it means is that I can very easily just write the dialogue for a comic and then go back and fill in the panel descriptions later. It really does speed up the process because you're not breaking the flow in dialogue to write the panel descriptions. You're just picturing what's happening and getting all the dialogue down. AND you can reread and revise the dialogue later as you tweak the panel descriptions.

So that's how I did this. I just blazed through and typed out Carl's full speech as I'd planned it. Why bother plotting it out on paper?

Don't worry though, these plots get denser as we go through this series. Sparse ones like this are few and far between.

18: Look, even on documents only meant for my eyes, I'm still writing misleading descriptions.

20: Oh, another edit. I lost the vomit.

22: Look at this. TWO abandoned options for the end of this issue. Originally, I'd planned to end with Carl completely self-sufficient and cooking for Rick when he wakes up. This was probably jotted down first, long before I actually plotted the issue out, so it was abandoned early. Then there was the "you always come back to me, dad--always." ending. A little more melodramatic, maybe, and a precursor to the "we don't die" bit with Rick and Andrea much later. Regardless, I went with the "I'm scared" ending. Carl flew too close to the sun, and now his wings are clipped... but only for now.

ISSUE 51

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

This era of TWD was such a great change of pace from what came before. Here we have a nice stand-alone issue that had Rick and Carl bonding, working together, and building a relationship between them that will be mined for years to come. All the while, we have the bit with the phone.

At this point in the series, I was starting to want to explore just how damaged these people are. Rick's mental state after what he lived through recently must have been questionable at best. So the phone was a way to explore just how close to "losing it" Rick really got. The goal was to show that the phone was a coping mechanism for him. He'd lost Lori, but this was a way to somehow get her back in some form.

I love the idea of the reader at that time not knowing what lies ahead in the story, thinking maybe it's just going to be Rick and Carl from here on out. How cool would that have been?

It's fun to think of what could have been. I definitely enjoyed writing these issues enough that I could have extended this indefinitely. I don't think I planned to do this many Carl and Rick issues, but I was having a good time, so why not.

In fact, that's what that list of numbers at the top of the plot is. 49-54 are the issue numbers that would make up the next collected edition. So I was having a good time and thought, "Wait, I need to know when this arc will technically end so I can have the arc make some sort of sense." I wanted to see how long I could stay with Rick and Carl before I needed to get on with what was coming next.

The notes in the bottom right of the plot was me figuring out the end before I started plotting the issue, making sure I had that locked down.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Just to show time passing, stats of the house. A "photostat" is a reproduction of an image. So in comics, when you repeat the same image in a panel, it's called a "stat" for short.

3: The book Carl reads, *Elsewhere,* was one of my favorite books as a kid, right up there with the Narnia books. Written by Will Shetterly if you want to look it up.

4: Frankly, this is a bad transition on my part. When I was re-reading the comic recently for this entry, I didn't know where they were. Oh, this is a different house? Sheesh. I should have made things a little clearer.

5: Was it a giveaway that there wasn't a sound effect for the ringing phone? Or was it overkill to have Carl also say, "What is it?"

7: Just working dialogue out on the page.

10: "guy from the cover" means "Oh, man... do work in the cover image." Again, covers are done way in advance and are usually based on a vague notion of what I have planned for the issue. There's a lot of issues coming up, especially in the 70s, where this led to some problems.

11: In the end, it didn't take much convincing for Carl.

12: I had it subtle in the plot, and when I scripted it, I made the man's suicide more explicit with the mention of Carol. I supposed it's good to call back to Carol, but it might have been better to leave it more subtle.

14-15: So apparently, I planned to have Carl angry that Rick was talking to a woman so soon after Lori had died. Thankfully, I abandoned this plot altogether.

17-18: So all this got moved up two pages to give us more room to wind things down.

19: Originally, he was going to find that the line wasn't connected to the wall. I thought it would be better if he unplugged it himself and then kept talking, so that little change was scribbled in.

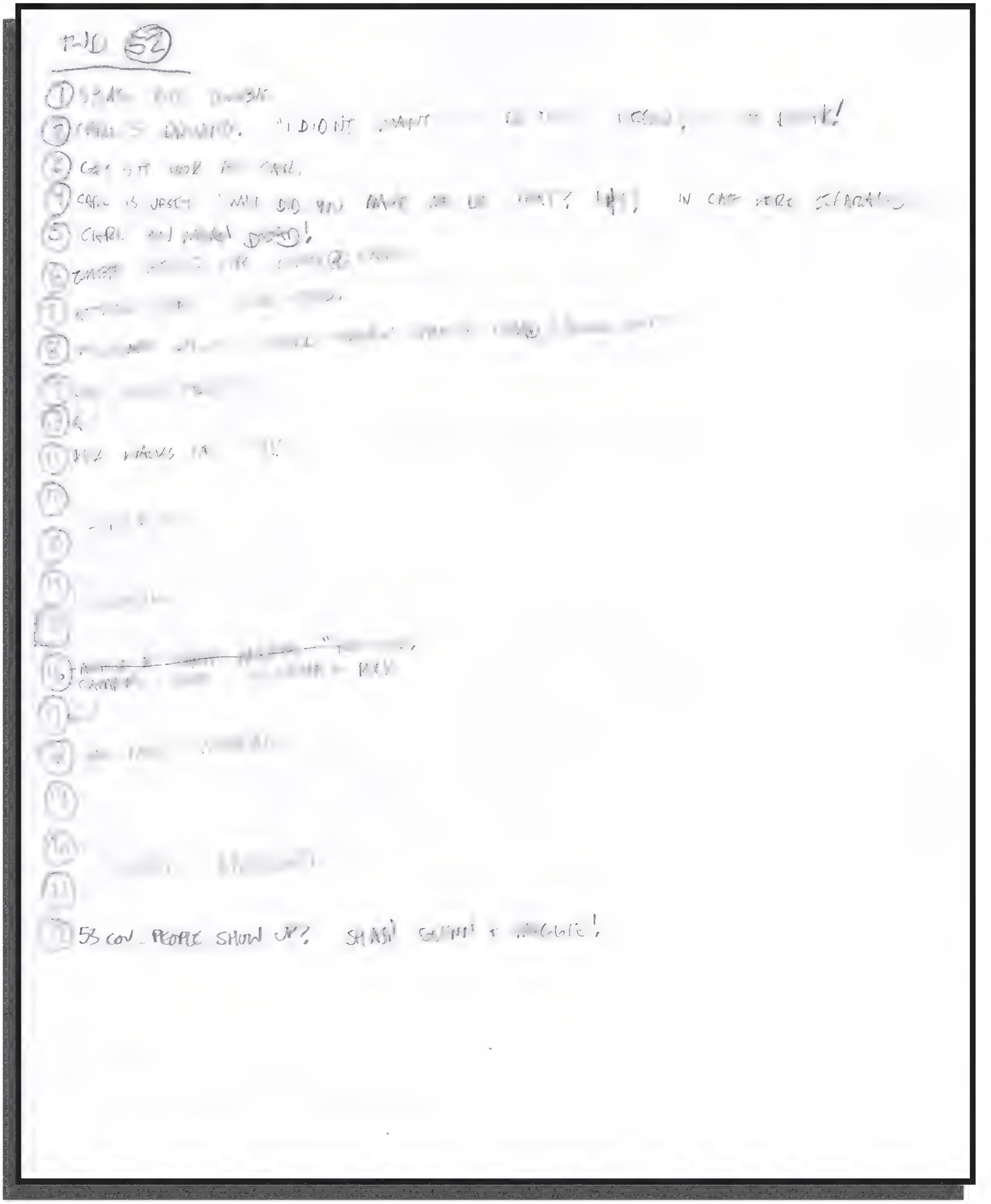
20: The new 18 and 19 became two emotional pages with Rick. I feel like the space was used wisely.

21-22: The ending is by the numbers, pretty much exactly how I'd worked it out in the plotting stage. It's nice when a plan comes together.

ISSUE 52

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Well, wasn't this a nice and cheerful issue? A little bit of zombie killing, and TWO, count them TWO, character reunions! First, we get Michonne back, and then Glenn AND Maggie! Man, readers must have been so happy.

Have we talked about the life raft? I mean, I hope it wasn't too obvious, but yeah, Glenn, Maggie, Dale, Andrea, Sophia, Ben, Billy... they all left the prison in that RV, and at the time, it probably read as a sad goodbye. I don't think any readers thought that we'd never see them again, but maybe they wouldn't be in the book regularly anymore, or maybe they'd end up being villains eventually, or maybe the Governor would catch them and torture or kill them, but no... it was totally a life raft. I put the characters I wasn't ready to kill in it and sent them off. And now, half a dozen or so issues later, they're back.

Rereading this series for these entries has been a lot of fun. I am noticing shortcomings on my part here and there though. I wonder how obvious the life raft move was back when these issues first came out. I certainly don't remember any mail about it, but for all I know, there was a letter or two printed in the classic Letter Hacks a few pages before this very entry. I DON'T reread the Letter Hacks entries. There's only so much time in the day, and these new seasons of INVINCIBLE won't write themselves!

But enough about other things keeping me busy.

All in all, this was a pretty straightforward issue that didn't have any big changes along the way. There's very little written on the actual plot, as you can see. No notes, no future ideas. This issue just cooked, as I recall.

So, let's just dive in.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Right away, I changed my mind and opted for this to be a page-turn.

2: This was originally going to be the page-turn reveal, that CARL is driving. I guess the big splash page of the car hitting the zombie seemed like a cooler move to me at the time. Looking back, maybe that was a mistake. I know zombies were becoming less and less present in the book, and I was trying to change that where I could. So, a full page of zombies milling about seemed important. I get why I did it... but... eh.

3: Decided to keep them in the car. No need to get out, really.

4-5: An emotionally charged conversation after recent events. It's fun when a story can turn "teaching your son to drive" into such an emotional situation. Zombies make everything better.

6-8: The effort to get more zombies in the book is very clear here. Does this need to be a three-page sequence? Nah. But is it COOL as one and reestablishes the threat of zombies now that they aren't safe in the prison? Yes. It's very effective in that way.

9: You can see that as I was plotting, I knew I'd need to move this moment down to page 10 so I could beef up the Michonne reappearance.

11: Yes, I planned to devote an entire page to Rick walking up and saying, "Hi." I mean, not really. I'm sure this was just shorthand for Rick striking up a conversation.

12-13: They certainly did a fair amount of "talking" on these pages. I knew this would be Rick and Michonne catching up after being separated, so I knew what they would be talking about generally and didn't feel the need to waste time jotting it down. I'm SOOOO excited for you guys to see the later plots in this series, where I'd often run out of space on the page for things. THINGS. GET. DENSE.

14-15: More shorthand.

16: And look at that! I'd considered having them arrive at the farm on page 16. Man, that would have changed things. Instead, I opted to do camping and save the farm reunion for next issue.

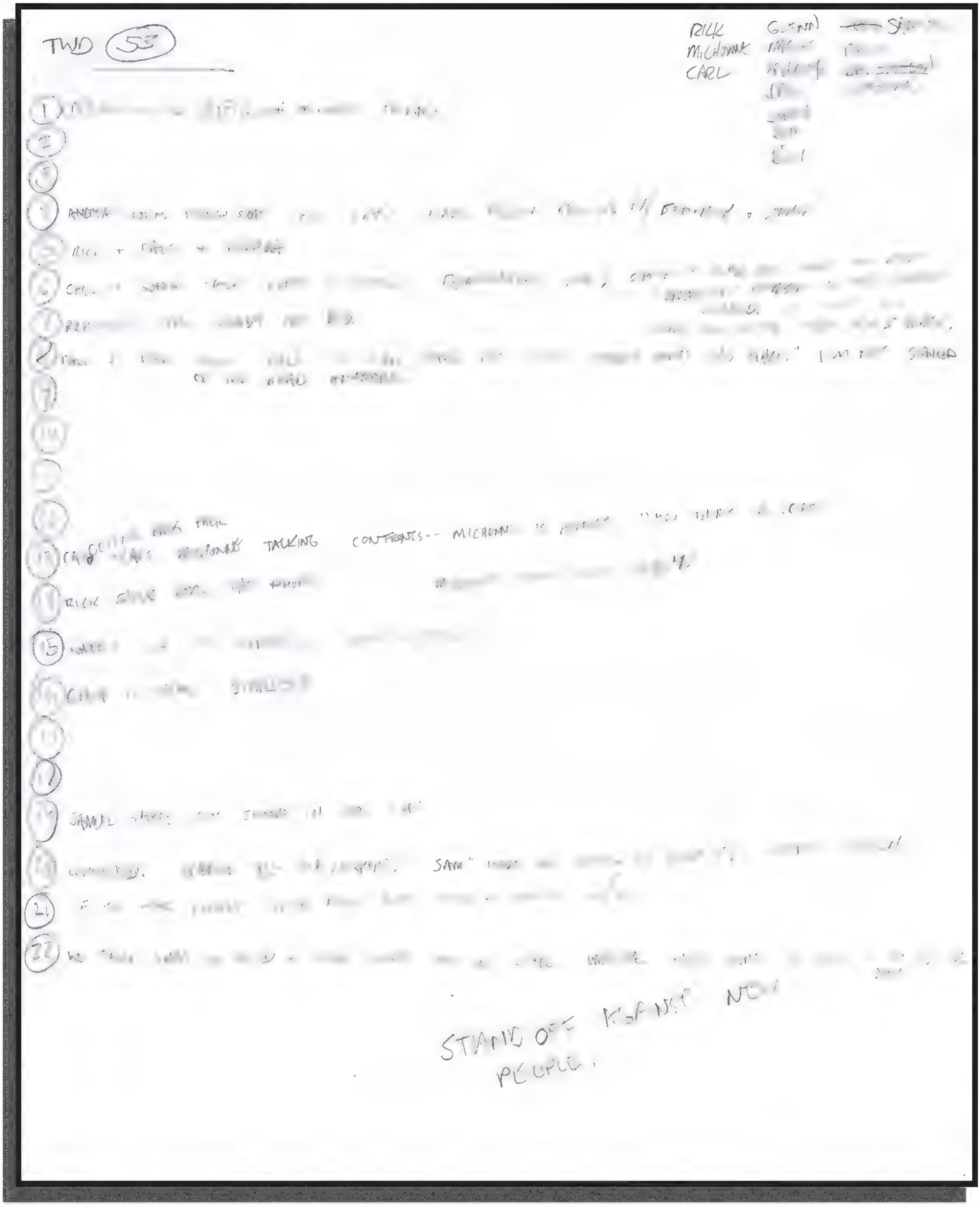
20-21: Backlit horses pretty much says it all.

22: "52 cov people show up" is obviously referring to Abraham, Rosita, and Eugene. This was most likely written at the time of the original page 16 plot. Then, when I opted not to get them to the farm, the ending was changed to Maggie and Glenn riding up on horseback. I honestly think I changed things so Abraham and the rest would make their first appearance in a comic they were on the cover of, which I was trying to do more of back then, just to show the characters were important enough to get a cover announcing their arrival.

ISSUE 53

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Holy crap! Is this the first issue in the run that is pretty much all positive?! I mean, not only do you have the return to Hershel's farm and all those reunions, but then we hit you with that totally optimistic ending. Yeah, there's some sad news along the way, but by this point, that was par for the course.

So that ending. The idea back then was, hey, issue №50 is a benchmark for a lot of things... but the most important one is that you have to recognize the audience has been reading this story for a LONG time, so you need to do something to change things up and keep things interesting.

So, for the first time ever, Dr. Eugene Porter shows up with A MISSION. How cool is that? Now the series has a new drive to propel it forward... and keep it interesting for many issues to come. That was the idea, at least. And... uh... look, the series lasted for almost 150 more issues, so I guess it definitely worked.

Look at that cool list of characters in the top right-hand corner. Gotta keep track of everyone. But look, Abraham was originally GREG... and then SAMUEL... and then, at some point, ABRAHAM. And Eugene was originally Dr. Sampson, or Simpson, I can't really make it out, honestly.

Samuel actually stuck through the entire plotting process. I don't think I came up with Abraham until the issue was close to getting lettered. Why did I decide not to stick with Samuel? I don't recall, but I know Samuel is nowhere near as cool as Abraham. Sorry to all you Samuels out there... but I think you know.

"Stand off against new people" at the bottom of the page was a note written before the issue was plotted as a general idea of what happens in the issue.

Who are those "new people"? This is the issue that introduces Abraham, Rosita, and Eugene. The depths of their personalities don't come into play for another issue or two, but more than anything, I wanted to introduce more strong, capable characters into the cast now that we'd lost so many. Abraham and Rosita definitely provided that. Eugene's intellect eventually becomes a massive asset to the characters as well.

Three hugely important characters introduced in one issue. Nice.

PAGE NOTES:

1: This is another glimpse of how I plot things on paper these days. I do way more panel breakdowns in the plots these days. You could almost say too much... maybe. Who knows.

2-3: These pages just wrote themselves like magic.

4: Sometimes it's a little funny to me how close to the final pages these plots are. Sometimes I wonder what would happen if I just sent the artist one of these plots to see what kind of comic came back. How did Stan Lee use to do it? That would be a fun experiment sometime.

5: When you see a plot like this, "Rick and Dale and Andrea", sometimes I have a general idea of what's being said so I don't write it down, but honestly, by this point, the characters had such distinct personalities in my head that they really did write themselves in a way. You know what the circumstances of the reunion are. You know the events they need to discuss, and you know their dispositions, so you know how they're going to react. So yeah, after 50 or so issues, there were times when I'd just pick a few characters for a scene, and the scene would just come together. Good times.

7: Bumped this back to add more room for the Sophia scene. For this bedtime scene, I was really channeling my childhood when my bedtime was 8 p.m., and in the summertime, it didn't get dark until 9 p.m. or later. Man, I sure used to hate that.

8: This was moved all the way down to page 10. It's a really important distinction, Dale saying that people don't want to take the farm. I think it represents an evolution in how the characters are thinking in this world.

9-12: I knew I was expanding the earlier scenes by this point, so I left these blank.

13-14: Huge bonding scene for Michonne and Rick here. It's funny in hindsight now that we see how the two characters ended up in the show. That relationship could have started here, but we went in a different way.

15: This stuff was moved to the beginning of page 16, keeping it all on the page turn.

16-18: Knew this standoff would go long.

19: Samuel sure does kill a zombie in a cool way.

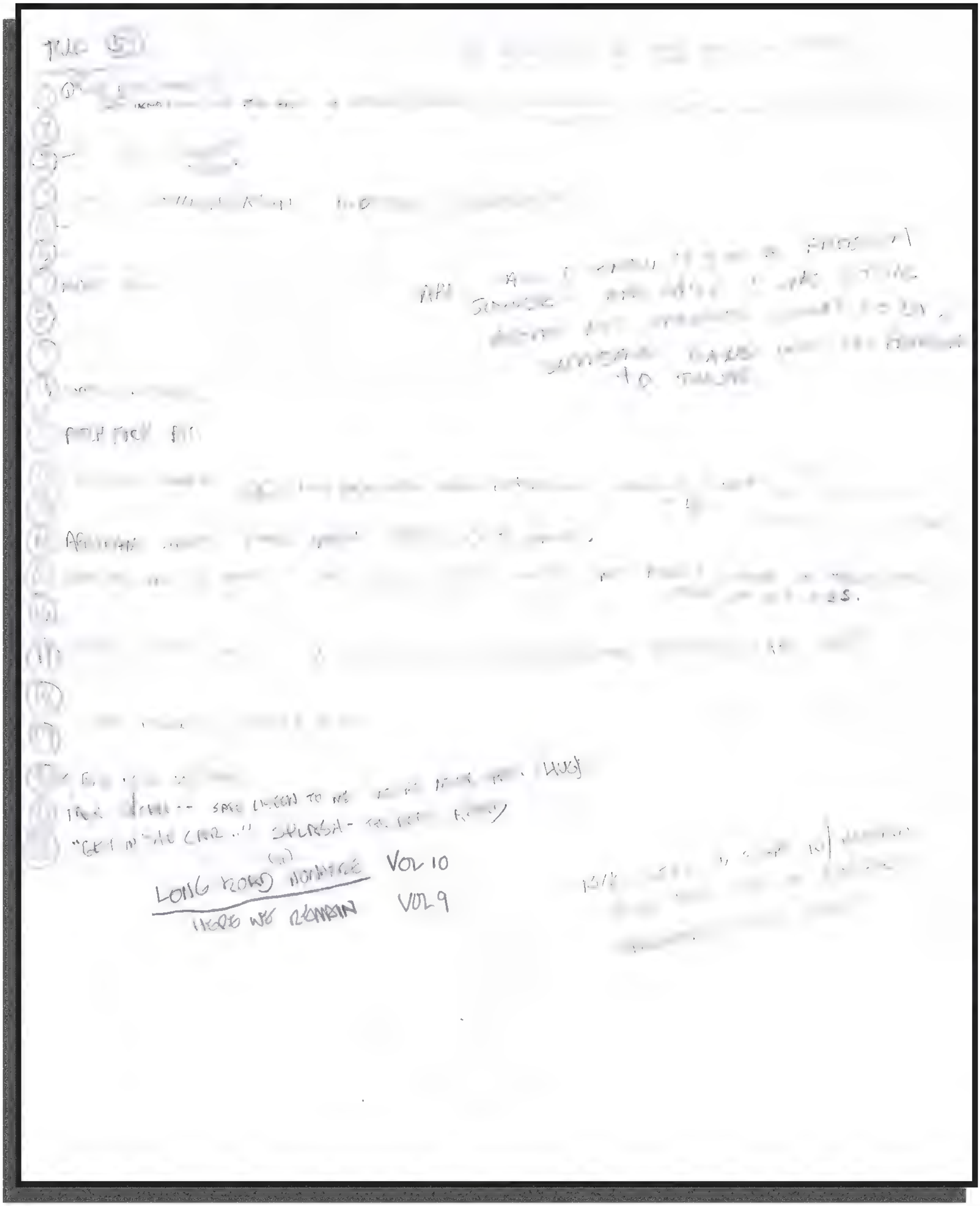
20: It was important to me that Abraham and crew bring new knowledge into the fold. This radius talk is pretty obvious, and our crew should have already known it, and gosh, did they? I feel like there was a little talk of this when they were outside Atlanta. Oh, well.

22: So, as you can see... the end of this issue was completely made-up on the fly. The original end was going to be Abraham saying they were going to take whatever they needed no matter what. Making them SEEM like bad guys. The Washington, D.C. ending, and Eugene knowing the cause of the zombies, all just came about because I thought, "Eh... this ending isn't good enough."

ISSUE 54

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Boy, oh boy, look at that plot over there to the left. This is a real gem of a plot. There's tons of things all over the place, but when it comes to the pages, very little. This was definitely a run-and-gun issue where I didn't have everything blocked out when I started typing up the script.

"You ain't seen a herd yet, have you?"

You see that note at the top? That's the birth of the "herd" terminology, frequently used in this series and the TV show. FUN FACT... in hindsight, "herd" makes me think of cows which, well... isn't very threatening. So, I very quickly came to dislike the term. It just started sounding... LAME to me pretty quickly. To be honest, I shudder a bit when I hear it or read it. The main reason for that is that almost IMMEDIATELY after it started appearing in print, I realized "HORDE" would have been a MUCH better name.

Ugh.

Also, I'm a huge *Masters of the Universe* fan, and Hordak is one of my favorites, and everyone knows he led the Evil Horde... so that would have been a fun association for me.

Spoiler alert. When a much later community was introduced near the end of this series, I had them refer to herds as hordes, so I kind of fixed it... but not really.

Herds. Sigh.

ANYWAY. Fun bits of dialogue all over the page. Abraham's problem-solver rant is in the center of the page but oh, dear... look what's near the bottom on the right.

"Rick gets in fight w/Abraham. Bites him like a zombie. Abraham--hurts Carl?"

More spoilers: That's a nice proto idea that eventually happens in the series, but not like that... not really at all. So, there's the nugget that eventually became that somewhat famous scene. And look... it was originally supposed to be Abraham! Wouldn't that have been different?

It's so nice when there's an ACTUAL idea on the cutting room floor in these entries.

One last thing, you'll see near the bottom, trade paperback title ideas. Any time one of these would come to me, I'd always jot them down, so I didn't forget. If I haven't revealed the secret to these volume names... here goes. They were ALWAYS three words, and they ALWAYS needed to sound at least somewhat aloof... to me. And most everything sounds aloof to me, for I am but a simple man.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Jumping right back in after the big revelation from Eugene.

2-3: Originally, this would have been one of my beloved "two-page spread of a head" pages. I'm certain I've gone over this before, BUT man, oh man, there's nothing in comics I love more than a two-page spread of a head. Easy to draw. Great dramatic punch. Looks good. Totally fun. More people should put them in their books. This spread would have originally been a big shot of Rick saying, "Uh... what?" and man... this issue would have been so much better. What a mistake I made.

4: This was moved UP to page two. See what happens when you get rid of a two-page spread of a head? They're awesome, but not very efficient.

7: More talk... I had a general idea of what they would be discussing. No need to write it out before I typed it.

10: Less a zombie attack and more just a cool drawing of zombies approaching.

11: I had some plan for Abraham to do cool stuff with the pitchfork. Can't go wrong there.

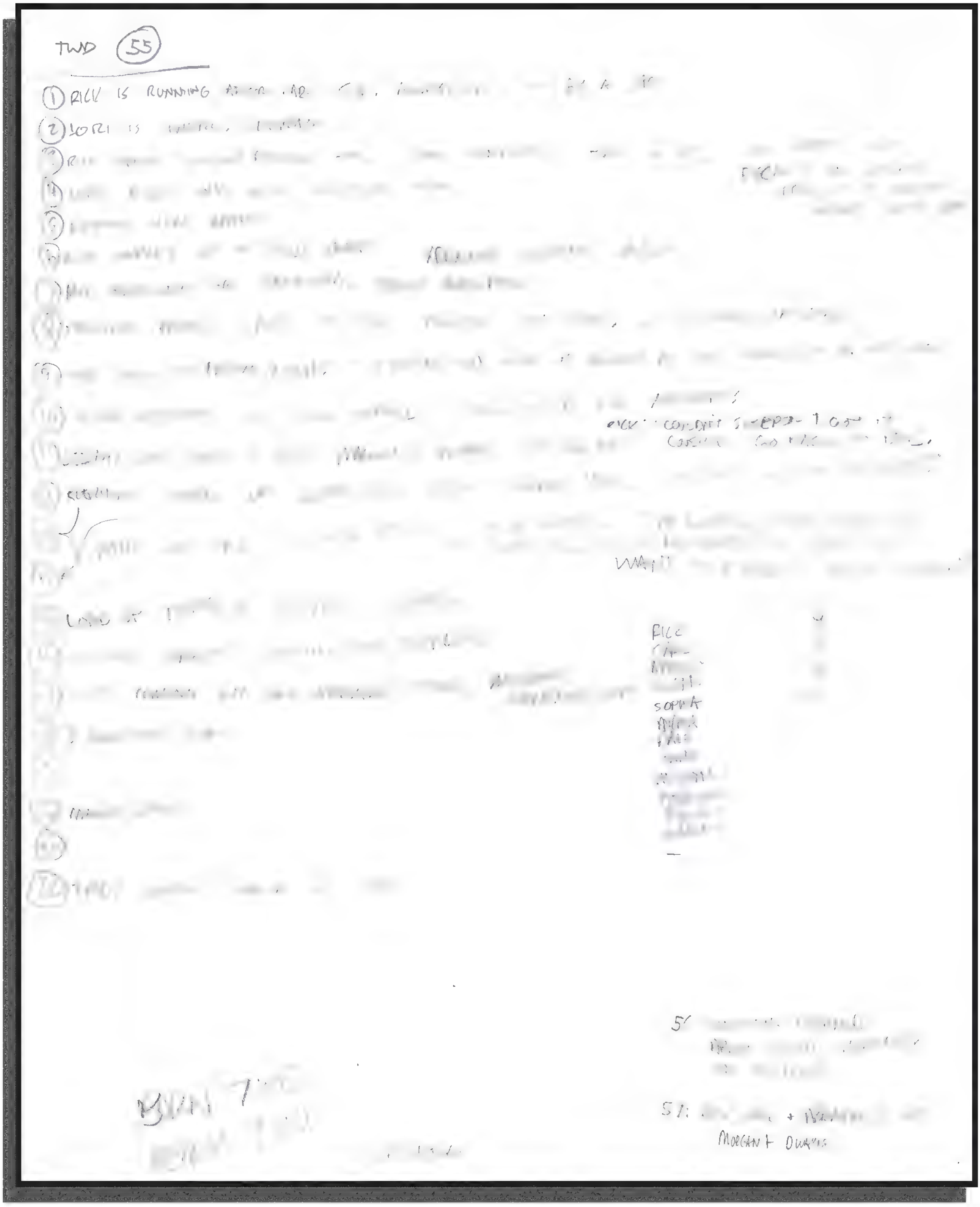
12-13: "Head bashed open, brains leaking out -- walks up to group in background." That's the panel on page 15, it didn't make it into the book until then. Sometimes, it's important to really plan out your cool/gross moments. I mean, this is a ZOMBIE book after all.

16-17: This Dale and Rick talk was compressed to one page. Gotta leave more room for Abraham fighting!

20-21: "big talk w/Carl" ending up becoming the somewhat memorable "you are not safe" speech. Which was originally supposed to end with a hug. I guess I decided to make Rick a little colder in the end.

22: NOT a big splash page cliffhanger, and also, this ended up being the end of a trade paperback collection as well! I mean, it's a big deal. They're going to Washington! But as far as the end of collections goes, this might be one of the weaker ones. Or maybe that "looking down the road" moment is exactly what the book needed at this time. Man... I wonder what happened to those horses...

ISSUE 55
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman



There was a plan originally to have each 6th issue, the start of every trade paperback, be a flashback scene. At some point, it fell by the wayside, and I decided against it. I'm actually not a fan of flashbacks. I think they're an effective tool that is used to great effect by writers far more skilled than I. Yet, for some reason, I just don't care for it in my work. I don't really know why. I just prefer to focus on moving forward.

Ed Brubaker used to get really annoyed with the various campfire scenes in the book. He'd complain that when I had characters tell stories about their past, I'd have Charlie draw the character talking and tell the story rather than actually SHOW the story they were telling. I know it's the obvious "show not tell" storytelling rule that I'm breaking, but for me, the emotion they're feeling in the moment while telling the story is more important than seeing the story they're telling unfold.

I'm more than willing to admit I'm wrong. **ahem* 45 million copies sold *ahem**

Anyway, this issue doesn't exactly start with a flashback, more of a dream sequence. But it still harkens back to that original plan.

Okay... that weak zombie that Eugene documents... man, that was a mystery, right? Where was that leading? Um... nowhere? To be embarrassingly honest, I simply don't recall if there was ever a plan for that to become a full plot. I know I'd intended at some point for Eugene to study zombies more closely, maybe even do experiments on them, and then I realized I was just turning him into Dr. Frankenstein from Romero's *Day of the Dead*.

I've never tried to hide how much inspiration Romero's movies were to me for this series. I will always maintain there would be no WALKING DEAD without the godfather of the modern zombie. That said, I think this series is at least a slight innovation to the genre, the same as how *Shaun of the Dead* or *World War Z* brought new things to Romero's sandbox.

Romero kept making zombie movies, and with *Day of the Dead, Land of the Dead,* and what followed, it was clear the evolution of the zombies was something Romero very much wanted to explore. I felt evolving or changing our zombies in any way would have veered too close to his hallowed work. So, I dabbled but for the most part... steered clear.

Okay, what's at the bottom of this plot? "Born 7:00, Death 9:00". I think that was for some anecdote a character was going to relay about losing a baby. I can't remember if that ever made it into the book or not.

Nailing down Rosita's last name at the bottom there.

And nailing down what was actually going to be in the issue for №56. More on that in the entry for next issue.

Lastly, I figured out what was going to be in issue №57. Good times!

PAGE NOTES:

1-5: Pretty much by the numbers so far. Nothing really changed or moved at all in this sequence.

6-7: Oh, no... did I follow this thing exactly?

8-9: Whew. Okay... so for this bit, I ended up expanding it by two pages. I just had more for Lori to be saying to Rick, so I let them ramble on a little more, and it really was time for Rick to start regretting going down this road, so I fit that in.

13-14: Okay, here you can see that I DID plot out these two extra Lori pages before typing them up. I just added them later in the plot.

15: Clearly, I decided to add more drama to this and keep the tension between Rick and Abraham at least a little high.

16: Hey dummy! Don't forget this is a zombie book. (I would later completely forget this is a zombie book.)

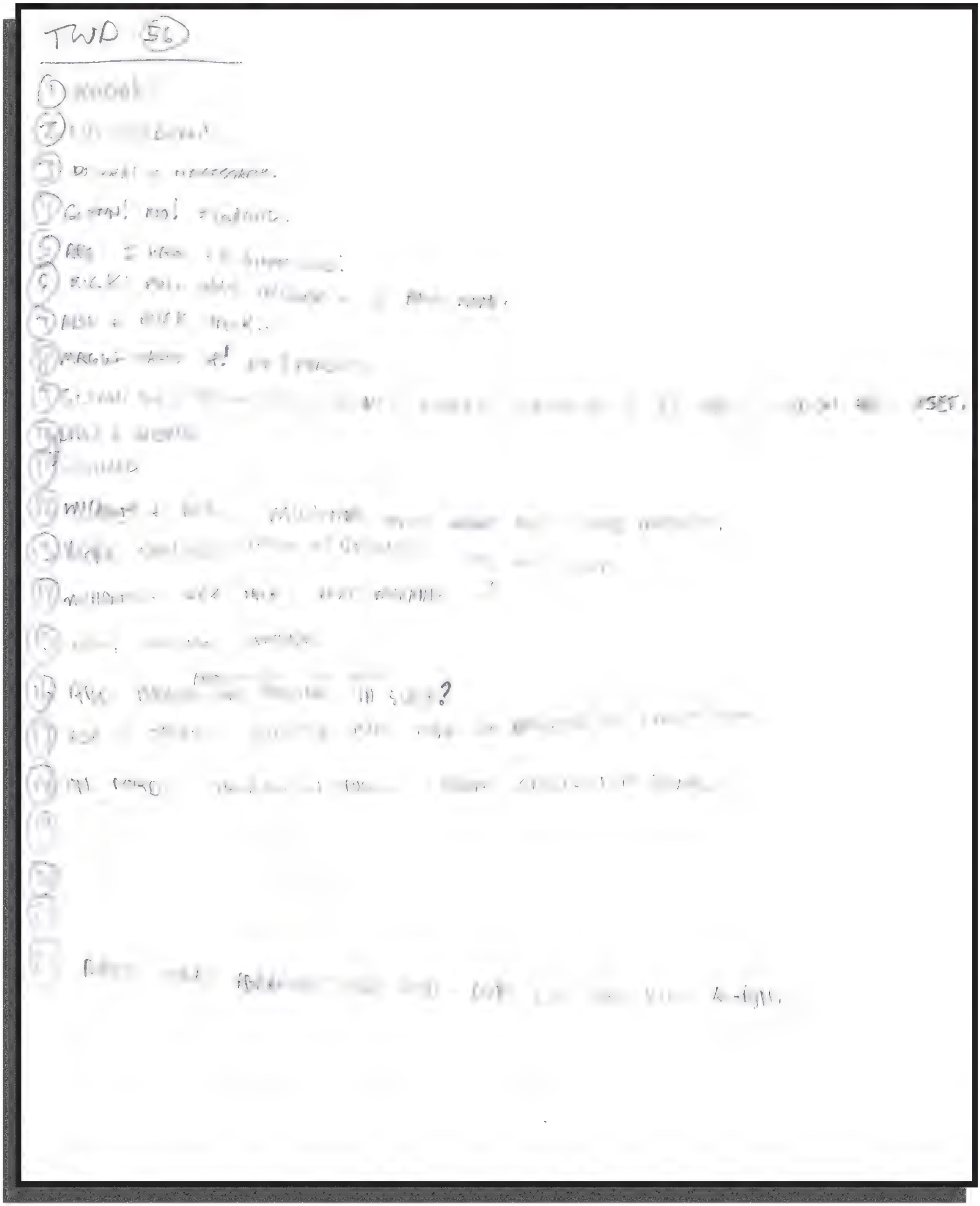
18: Ah, the ol' "Something cool" plot entry. I guess this is why I came up with the "malnourished zombie" bit on the fly. Maybe... just maybe, I should have spent more time on this plot? Just maybe? Or really... since this plot was so close to the final issue... maybe I should have second-guessed myself a little bit more? Eh.

20-21: And man, what a downer ending for this issue. Has there been a fictional family with a more tragic story than the Greene family? In hindsight, it really seems like I had it out for these nice people. I mean... we systematically whittled them down to one final family member, and poor Maggie is pushed to this? Eek.

ISSUE 56

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Man, this issue reminded me how fun this series was to write. I just loved Abraham as a character. He's clearly taking a heel turn this issue, but then that cliffhanger brings it all around. He's a potential villain who maybe, just maybe, doesn't want to be. The glorious coloring of the esteemed Mr. Dave McCaig aside... man, look at those shades of gray in this issue. It was just an absolute blast weaving characters like this.

The zombie apocalypse was such a heightened setting that it provided cover for whatever nutty thing I wanted to do or whatever direction I wanted to take the characters. Any wild character swing could totally be justified by the massive amounts of stress the characters were under.

That's it! I'm bringing the series back. I'm calling Charlie today, and we're going to get started on issue №194!

...

Kidding. I'm kidding. Sorry about that.

All joking aside, as we get deeper into the series, I definitely reread these issues less and less. In the beginning, every time I started a new 6 issue chunk of issues, I'd reread the whole series. So, by the time I got to issue №24, I had read issues №1-6 four times (probably more). But as the series grew, and especially after the TV show blew up my schedule, I'd only get around to rereading things once every few years.

The point I'm trying to make is... as we get further along, I'm remembering the details of this series less and less, so when I reread the book for this DELUXE release, it's almost like reading something I didn't write. Although, it does help the memories to flood back. So don't worry, these entries will continue to provide the occasional bombshell revelation.

Like... this issue was a roller coaster to write. I was genuinely considering making Abraham a bad guy for a lot of it. It could have gone either way. It wasn't until I finally got to the end of plotting the issue that I decided to pull things the other way a bit.

That was a close one!

All in all looks like a pretty clean plot over there. Not a lot of margin notes. No notes for the future. No character checklist. This was another smooth issue. Not a lot of struggle to work things out with this one.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Pretty clear and succinct representation of what's going on here. This poor Greene family... and really poor Sophia. Not a great move, writing a way to have Maggie, Sophia's new mother figure, make the same move as Carol. Possibly a bit repetitive, frankly. But again, the stress of the apocalypse would definitely bring about a lot of this kind of thing. A rather heavy subject for me to discuss in a somewhat flippant, cold, story-analytical way, I know. So, I apologize for that.

2-8: This is more or less exactly as plotted. Not a lot of surprises here.

9: Big shoutout to Charlie Adlard for how he interpreted Abraham being upset in the final panel of this page. Huge character transition. And you really get a sense of the regret and shame Abraham feels from that one panel. One single image tells so much. That's the Charlie Adlard magic we all know and love.

10-11: This scene was squeezed to one page, because, obviously, it didn't need to be two. I mean, "w/ twins" never really needed its own page. What was I thinking?

12-13: All of this was moved to later. Instead, I added the Rick night watch scene where he and Abraham threaten each other. It really added a lot to the issue, and I feel was a much-needed scene. Luckily it came to me later but with enough time to rearrange things and fit it into the issue. Also, I was able to squeeze in the one-page Maggie/Glenn scene. Otherwise, I hadn't planned to spend any time with them past Maggie's suicide attempt. That would have been a huge mistake.

14: This happens where it's plotted, but all the talk that I cut on pages 12-13 was moved here.

15: Pages like this in the plot give me room to juggle things around. A whole page devoted to a hug and smile? Probably never going to happen.

16: So funny. This plot was REALLY getting away from me here. The previous scene was morning, but this scene was intended to be at night. I already knew I'd be juggling things quite a bit, so I was just throwing things in to figure out later. And look at that. This scene was going to be Abraham, asleep, accidentally hitting Rosita and waking her up, hurting her in the process. It was meant to show Abraham's trauma that he was dealing with. It was causing him restless, violent sleep. In the end, I didn't need it. The final page was so much more intriguing.

17: More nonsense left on... the cutting room floor.

18: This scene as well, just left, so the entire plot of Abraham saving Rick from the zombie and not even really knowing if he was already aiming the gun at him, all was devised while I was scripting. Sometimes I really did play things fast and loose and let the stories come to me as I was writing them.

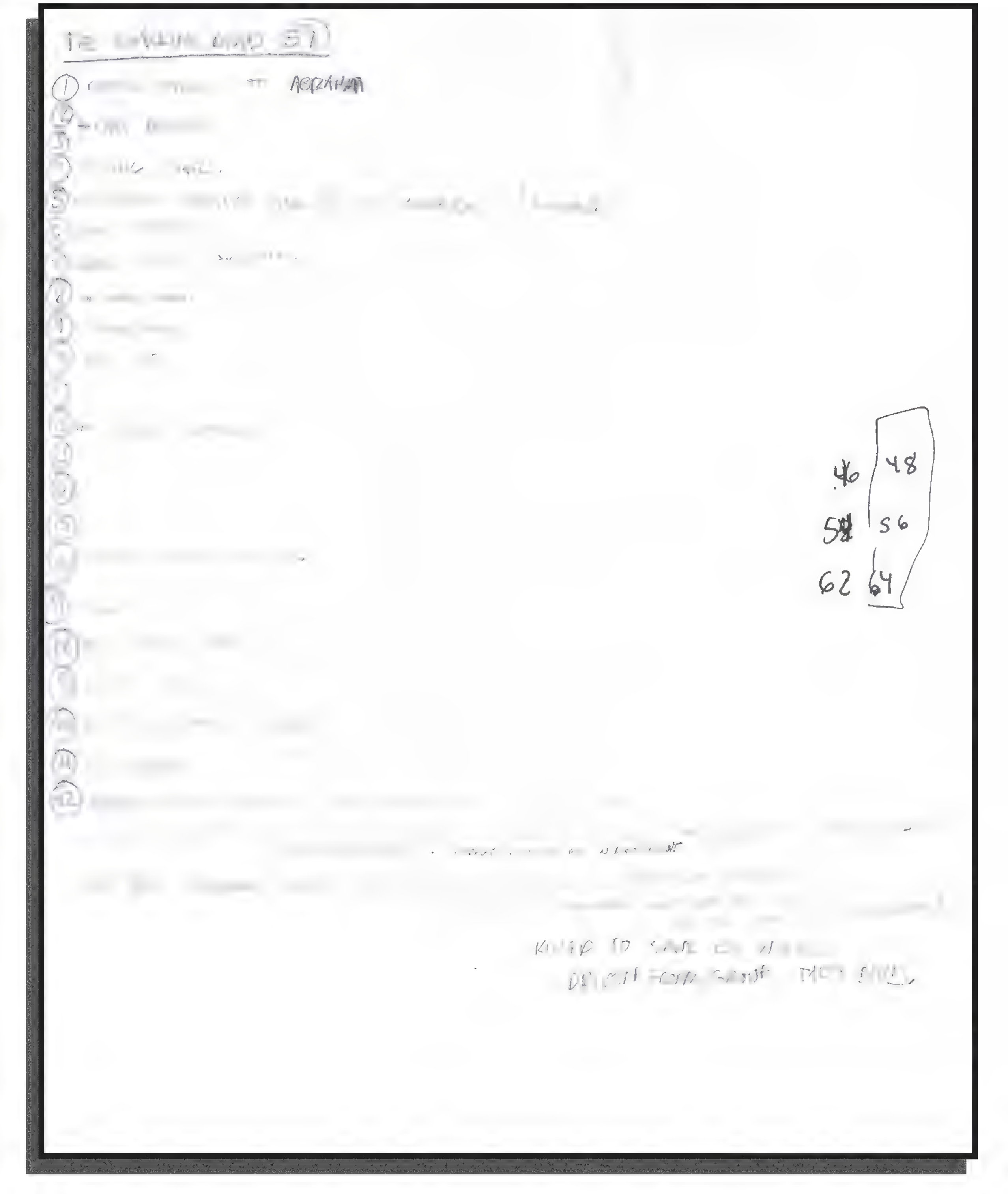
19-21: Completely blank. I KNEW I was going to be changing things drastically at that point, so I just stopped plotting and dove into the script to wrap things up. I remember when I was typing my scripts... if I could just get to page 16, I'd finish the script in that sitting. For whatever reason, all the dominos were set up by the time I got to 16 that I'd just fire through all the way to the end. This is definitely an issue where you can see that. Page 16 is the pivot point where the issue just RACES to the end.

22: I had this ending planned. This was probably written while I had the whole Abraham assassin moment in my mind, and I just wrote this part down but dove into the script to write the rest.

ISSUE 57

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Well, is this the darkest issue yet? Maybe. Yeesh. I mean... yeesh. Where to begin?

This is the issue where Carl nearly gets raped by marauders, and Rick essentially becomes a living zombie in order to save him.

I'd had the "Rick bites a guy like a zombie" scene planned for a while. I don't remember the exact genesis of the idea. I just thought it would be cool to push things to the point where Rick had to behave like a zombie in order to survive. From there, it was just a matter of coming up with a situation dire enough to drive Rick to do that.

And well, you see what I came up with. Eek.

I mean, heck, it's a dark book, we go to some dark places. It's a savage world. The funny thing is, by this point I had kids. And I don't think this happens to everyone, but for a time after my kids were born, it made me significantly more sensitive to violence. Scenes that wouldn't have bothered me at all suddenly upset me more now that I had kids.

So, from time to time... it would make me want to hold back on certain storylines. And that would make me feel like my kids were making me... soft. So what happened was if I ever felt myself pulling back... it would make me push even further into this direction. To prove to myself that having kids wasn't going to ruin the series.

The odd side effect of that... is that having kids... kind of made my work darker. What would happen is that I would start to think, "you're only pulling back because you've gone soft because now you have kids!" That would make me push against that notion and go forward no matter what. The crazy thing is, pre-kids... maybe I would have talked myself out of doing some of the darker stuff... but post-kids, I forced myself to ignore that objectivity.

So yeah... me having kids made THE WALKING DEAD much darker. You're welcome?

All in all, this plot is pretty sparse. It all kind of came together in my head. Not really a lot to talk about here. In the top right corner, you see me listing the issues that are collected in the Volume 10 trade paperback and a possible title for the book, which we didn't end up using. Rather than "Long Road Ahead" we went with "What We Become" to play off Rick's actions in this issue.

So... let's dive into this plot.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Starting off accurate and boring.

2-3: Boo ya! Cool spread.

4: "Moving car?" Really, Robert? You're giving me nothing to talk about here!

5: Now we're talking. This didn't end up making it into the book, well, here at least, but we do get Carl being impressed by Michonne killing zombies with her sword.

6: Ah, the ol' "more of that." When I'm reasonably certain a scene could use more space, but I leave it vague enough to do something else if I want.

7: Andrea teaches something? Unfortunately, I just turned this into Andrea and Dale discussing the events around them in a somewhat dull way. What? I can be critical if I want!

8-9: Okay. Maybe this is why these scenes are somewhat dull. I didn't put any effort into lining up really interesting things for them. I was very much in a "I'll figure this out later" mode.

10: Good ol' I-75. Anyone who lives in... Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, or Ohio (and I think... other states, too?) is very familiar with I-75. Living in Kentucky and having family in Florida, I certainly spent a large chunk of my childhood on that road, so that was me using my own geography knowledge for the book. It helped to set this book in the region I grew up in.

12: This is shorthand for Carl, Abraham, and Rick leave together.

14-16: You can see how I'm moving this up more and more as I plotted. I knew I needed more room to build up to the bite.

18: "Rick bites dude." Just throwing it out there plainly.

19: "Chews. Blood." (Some of this stuff was written pretty lightly, so I'm just making sure you guys can read it.) Gotta give things like this their own page for impact.

20-21: This is all pretty much by the numbers. Blood-covered Rick scares the shit out of the other guys, so they relent and release Carl. All of this got moved up, though.

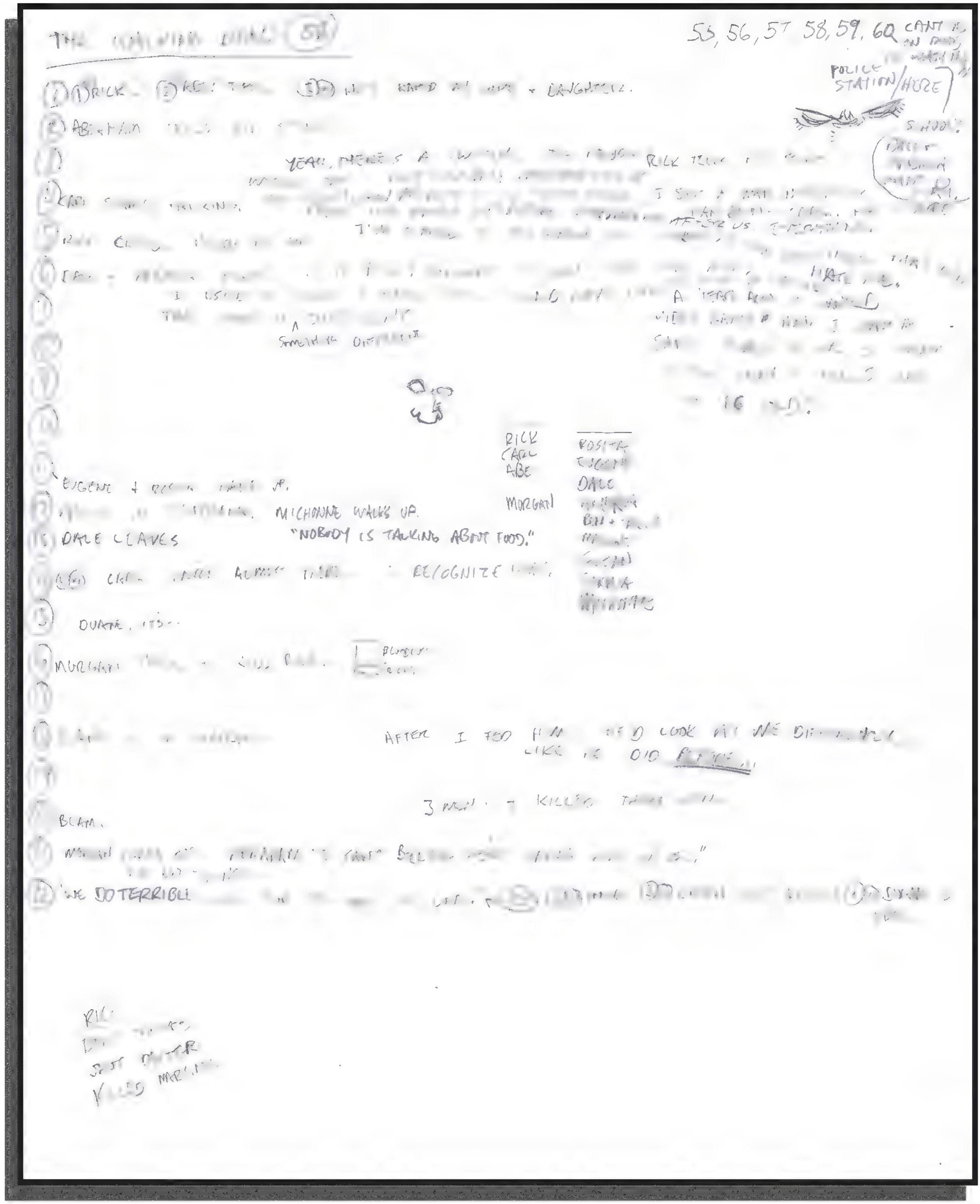
22: This ending was completely changed. The aftermath seemed like the way to go. Also giving the final kill to Rick as opposed to Abraham felt right. Also, it was important to allow Carl to SEE what Rick was doing.

New last page at the end. See me challenge myself to come up with something different for Abraham's family back story. "Come up with something good for that, fucker" is me weirdly writing a note to myself. The sad thing is... as I sit here right now, I don't remember if I did. So, I suppose we'll all find out together! Did I land on "Killed to save ex-wife... driven from group... they died?" I vaguely recall that being it. Nice to see me working out ideas in real time on paper, huh? Based on the darkness of the letters, these things were probably written at least days apart.

ISSUE 58

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Is this one a bit of a turning point, writing-wise? Or just a high-water mark? Or just a blip along the way? Who knows. Maybe you decide, true believers!

It just seemed like this issue, more or less, had a theme to it, possibly for the first time, and it really came together in the end. Rick, Abraham, and Carl talking about all the horrible things they've done (so far) and how this world has changed them. And then they come to Morgan, a man who is killing people to feed to his zombified son. In the end they say, "Eh, who are we to judge."

That's a real sweet spot for this series. Showing things that would have been morally reprehensible in real life, but in the apocalypse the "I've seen worse" of it all kind of puts it all in perspective. Is it any wonder this series took an emotional toll on me after writing it for 16 years?

Look at this plot. What a mess. So much going on here. I even drew some eyes and a nose because at some point I got... bored? Okay. Let's dive in and try to make sense of all this.

Top right-hand corner. I'm plotting out another six-issue arc here because as it says, "can't end on Road to Washington." Now, people may not remember this, but there was a print given out at San Diego Comic-Con one year to promote the upcoming "ROAD TO WASHINGTON" storyline. That print featured the cover to issue №69 LONG before it was ever planned to run as a cover. I had that image; I knew the story was going to Washington, and that cover would be used when we got there... but I didn't know when that issue would fall. So here I'm plotting things out to make sure it's the BEGINNING of an arc and not the end.

Some notes about the group finding a police station or school that Dale and Andrea want to stay at are below this.

Unused dialogue for Carl scrawled in here that I wish I used somewhere: "A year ago I wanted video games. Now I want a safe place to live. I wonder is this what it feels like to be old?"

More character lists in the center of the page. Morgan being added as he was planned to join the cast. It used to always bug me when I was a kid when I'd watch TV shows, and they would introduce a cool character for an episode, and then they'd say goodbye at the end of the episode, and that was it. A new character joining a series and sticking around always seemed so rare. That's one of the reasons the cast of this series is always expanding and evolving. That seems more natural to me. Little did I know, the thing that annoyed me about those shows was due to budgets and actors' schedules and all kinds of real-world things.

So then it was SO ironic when Lennie James turned out to be so popular and in-demand that it took FOREVER to finally be able to get him back in *The Walking Dead* TV show. We wanted to make him a regular in season 2. The best we could do is a guest spot in season 3, and he didn't become a regular until season 4 or 5. My old childhood pet peeve, coming back to haunt me.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Little breakdown to get us started. Again, this is more like how I plot comics now, I go right into breaking out the panels on paper.

2: "Abraham tells his story." Look at that. So simple, so brief and it ends up filling 5 pages. You can see those tangled bits of dialogue notes below in the plot. I had some fragments laid out to keep the shape of the story, but all of that got blown out and expanded as I wrote.

4: So I don't know at what point I decided to just let these scenes RUN. The plan was always to have Abraham tell his story, then Rick tell his, then them find out Carl is awake and has been listening this whole time, and then Carl surprise them with his own story. But this was originally planned for page FOUR. Wow. I would do this from time to time, I'd just say... let's see how long this scene runs and just go from there. That's how the scene ended up running to page 9 instead of 4.

6: So this scene moved down to page 10.

11: This is evidence that I wrote out the first half of this script and then went BACK to the plot with page 11 here. I knew exactly where I left off.

12: "Arrive in Cynthiana." (My hometown and always where the Grimes family is from, so that's where Morgan is) was left over from the first pass at this plot. That's why it's written a little lighter and is also completely ignored.

16: Those little boxes next to the words here are me doing a little page layout of how I see the page. Big panel of "bloodlust" followed by small panel of "Rick?" Morgan kind of calming down.

18: Duane zombie reveal definitely fell on this page.

20: This fell to page 21. I spent more time on Morgan's emotional reveal. As you can see, it was originally only three men that Morgan had killed, but I suppose I thought that wasn't enough in the end.

22: Another page layout/plot page at the end here. I didn't end up following this exactly. And to be clear, while I do write page layouts into my script, I'm always upfront with the artists that they don't have to follow them. It just helps me ensure the dialogue isn't crowding things too much and that I'm not cramming too much into a page. Some artists appreciate it and follow it closely. Other artists ignore it completely and just run wild. I enjoy both experiences.

ISSUE 59
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD (59)

(1)
(2)
(3)
(4)
(5)
(6)
(7) PARK IN CAR ... NAKED WITHOUT A KEY!"
MORGAN... TALKING ABOUT A YEAR AGO... SO MUCH HAS CHANGED...
(9) GATHERING GUNS ... COVER
DRIVING. ... STAIRS AT CARL 61
NO ONE SLEEPS. ... SHOW MORGAN IS CRYING.

(12) HIGH TIDE
HIT ZOMBIES -- SWERVE AROUND CARS.

(16) ... ON FOOT...
BLOOD ON HIS FACE.
RICK

NIGHT... NOBODY SLEEPS.

WE'RE CLOSE WE CAN MAKE IT THERE ON FOOT-
BUT NOT WITHOUT COMING
SPLASH
THE WHOLE GODDAMN HORDE IS
AND I DON'T KNOW
THEM STOP!

THE DEAD
THE DEAD
THE DEAD
THE DEAD
THE DEAD

CARL'S IDEA

FIGHT

CANNIBALS

Hell yeah! Fun issue. Cool action. Neat ending. Very happy with how this one turned out. Really cool seeing the esteemed Mr. Adlard shine in the action moments. The way he handled the car wreck with Abraham tumbling through the air? *Chef's Kiss.*

I'm so proud to look back at these issues and see how varied the subject matter is from issue to issue. Last issue, lots of mood and emotion. This issue... a little of that, but man, this issue just cooks.

Neat stuff.

And look at that plot. MAN, there's a lot going on here. Look at that terrible zombie head I drew. I do think I doodle on these a little more as we move forward, which may not be a good thing. Yuck. Did I mention how great Charlie is?

Towards the right near the center of the page, you'll see a TINY layout for the cover to issue №61. Why I felt the need to sketch out a shot of Gabriel walking toward us is definitely lost in the sands of time... I mean, that's easy enough to describe. I know I wanted an image that harkened back to the cover of №19 and Michonne's first appearance, but again, easy enough to describe. Oh, well.

What's that at the bottom of the page? Why that's me working out ad copy for the upcoming FEAR THE HUNTERS storyline, the first promoted storyline of TWD, starting in issue №62. A lot of people don't do long-running series because it's HARD. I love it, it's literally all I got into comics to do, but it IS hard. You need tentpoles to keep people excited about the series. So, on INVINCIBLE and THE WALKING DEAD, I was constantly brainstorming with Eric Stephenson to figure out ways to do special issues, special storylines, and branded events to keep propping things up year after year to make the series seem new and fresh and exciting. A TON of work went into this, it was something constantly on my mind. So, you'll see more of this moving forward, too. Me working out various upcoming cover themes or ad campaign ideas. Fun times.

OH, and tucked in the bottom left of this thing, "Horde = Herd! Damn it." is the moment I realized HORDE was a much better name for that. Bummer.

I don't recall why it's there, but yes... it just says "FIGHT" over there on the right, and I think that's hilarious. What was that about?

PAGE NOTES:

1: Full disclosure. I believe these pages are blank because I'd already written them. It's no secret that Charlie Adlard is very fast. At times he was very hard to keep up with. It was always a struggle to get scripts done for him. At some point, before this issue was written, I learned from a writer whom I will NOT name (but his name rhymes with "TED BROOM-MAKER"), that he sometimes gave artists partial scripts... sometimes as little as three-page scenes to keep them working. Well... this was both a revelation and the beginning of the end for me. From that point on, well... let's just say Charlie mostly got scripts in three-page chunks from that point on.

So sometimes I'd be so behind that to keep Charlie busy, I'd send him a three-page opening scene to an issue before I even got around to plotting the whole issue. I'm not proud of it... but that's the truth. And I've gotten better at scheduling myself (a little), so I don't really do this anymore. I try to restrict myself to HALVES of scripts at worst.

4: Obviously, pushed back the arrival at the police station, but the rest of this stuck.

7: This bit with Rick and the keys is autobiographical. I've gotten over it these days, but I used to walk around Comic-Con in San Diego with my full set of keys in my pocket at all times, even though they all unlocked things that were on the other side of the country. Fun fact, when I was younger, I went to work without my wallet by accident, so I put a chain in a small box and taped it up (for weight), and kept that in my back pocket all day because my left buttocks felt cold without my wallet. Thanks for reading.

8: A rare instance where the timeline is addressed. I tried to keep things as vague as possible in the series, but every now and then, I tried to mark time in some way. The bit with Morgan smashing his head against the wall came to me at the last minute while scripting.

11: Maybe I have people crying too often in my books. It's possible. Good on Charlie for giving Morgan a haunted look here rather than the crying I'd intended in the plot.

14-15: The debut of a HERD in the series. Pages 12 and 13 are blank in the plot because I more or less knew what I needed to build up for this spread, and I didn't want to waste any time jotting it down.

16-18: All pretty much exactly as plotted. Honestly... one day I want to try working in a faux Marvel style where I just give the artist a hand-written plot and let them draw the issue from that, and then script it after. Charlie was more than capable of doing that, for sure. If I'd thought about it back then, I would have done it for an issue just to see if the issue stood out in any way.

19: It would appear I decided Morgan should have the injury rather than Rick as it was plotted. Rick had so recently been covered in blood, after all.

21: "Abe - we get tired -- they won't." I don't think this dialogue ever made it into the comic but in a complete coincidence... I feel like Shane said this exact line of dialogue in the show. It was either during the final OTIS scene in season 2 or it was in... big reveal: some deleted CDC scenes from the season 2 premiere where there was QUITE a bit of footage that ended up getting cut... almost an entire episode worth, actually.

22: Lots of various options for the final page scrawled out here. Originally, they were supposed to be so close to Michonne, Andrea, and the rest of the group that they were concerned about leading the herd to them. In the end, I thought it was enough jeopardy to have them just running from the herd. Good times.

ISSUE 60

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD (6)

(1) RUNNING. RICK SEES SIGN. STOP!

(2) [illegible] FROM THE GAS STATION WE [illegible]

(3)

(4) HOST

(5) PUT TO IT

(6) IN IT. CARL'S PLAN.

(7) SMASHING OUT.

(8)

(9)

(10) [illegible] KILLING CAT [illegible]

(11) DAN CALLS FOR [illegible]. ANDREA BACK ABOVE STARING [illegible]

(12) ALL LEG - "NOT BUILT FOR MOBILITY, ATTITUDE."

(13) LUCILLE + ROSITA.

(14) GLENN [illegible]

(15) [illegible] ABOUT BABY FAMILY [illegible].

(16) PULL + [illegible].

(17)

(18) BACK AT FARM

(19) CARL [illegible] TO [illegible].

(20) DALE, PISSED.

(21) HE RUINS EVERYTHING... RICK RUINS [illegible].

So, the proposed cliffhanger from last issue, "We're leading them right to them!" moved to the opening scene of this issue to heighten an already tense situation. It's a cool bit that works issue to issue and also provides a nice one-two punch when you're reading in collected form.

You guys noticed that, right? How each issue's last panel and the first page of the following issue fit seamlessly and work side-by-side for collections? Honestly, it was something that really helped me writing-wise because I always had to figure out the first page of the following issue while I was finishing the current one.

There's that novelist trick of not finishing a scene or even sometimes a sentence at the end of the day, so that the next day when you sit down to work, the first thing you do is finish the scene or sentence you left half done the day before. It gets you in the groove quickly. This was kind of that for writing comics. Often when I sat down to write an issue of THE WALKING DEAD... page 1 was already figured out and ready to go.

And... I do this for all my comics now. INVINCIBLE was the only series I didn't do this with (for the most part).

Sort of a lame cliffhanger. I guess it's a sign of my maturity though. In earlier issues, I would have totally gone further to imply Dale was going to turn on Rick just to make it a better cliffhanger. Pushing the character too far outside of where he should be just for the sake of a better ending. It's better I didn't do that.

But it's still not the best ending.

I guess by issue №60 I really worried about a lackluster ending for a single issue. BUT FUN FACT, this issue falls in place to be the end of the volume 10 TPB and the volume 5 hardcover! Oops!

Well, it all seemed to work out just fine.

Look at that plot over there. So nice and clean and simple. No pictures drawn, no future plots, no ad campaigns.

At the top: "End of TPB No Characters Die in this TPB." That was a big deal for me. It was starting to feel like character deaths were a crutch I was leaning on far too often. So, I wanted to see if I could do a whole volume without one.

Eventually, I wanted to do a whole volume without ANY zombies. I think I did more than a few issues here and there, but I don't think I ever got a full volume without any... probably for the better.

PAGE NOTES:

1: In the end, I didn't think Rick needed to see a sign.

2: Decided to turn this into a spread after I jotted down the dialogue. Hence the arrow pointing to page 3.

4: "House" Ah, shorthand...

5: It's a simple plot. Got the point across.

6: If you look at the previous plot from Cutting Room Floor, you can see I came up with "Carl's Plan" there.

7: "Sneaking out", arrow down all the way to page 9. I think this was me writing ahead of the plot to keep Charlie busy. While writing the scene, I added the tragedy of the family in the house. This kind of quiet scene is fast to write out, so it bought me a few pages to keep Charlie working and also gave the issue a nice tragic moment.

10: This got moved to page 12. Probably because I was jumping back and forth between script and plot and had already written a bunch of pages past where the plot was at.

11-12: This scene got moved down as well.

13: There was no plan for this scene. "Eugene + Rosita" just means, "Do something with them, Robert." It got cut, but there was never a real scene figured out.

14: With this page, the script caught back up to the plot, and everything is more or less as planned.

16: Page-turn moment. Rick shows up. Big action.

18: Another page-turn moment. Jump to the farm. When you have these big page-turn events one after another leading to the end of the issue, the plotting goes quickly because there are only so many page-turns left. 16, 18, 20, 22. Four big moments to end an issue? Those are the pages they fall on. That's the bread. Slide the meat in between... all done.

20: This dialogue was moved to page 18, really. And this page was instead used for what I like to call, "A little Abraham business."

21: Dale was pissed.

22: And yeah... the lackluster cliffhanger. Oh well, I ended on an important emotional moment instead of some kind of hammy moment. I should be proud of this. I'm a lunatic.

ISSUE 61
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

TWD (61)

STARSHIP

(1) FIND THE MAN

(2) CHRIS [illegible] CAME [illegible] THE TEAM;

(3) [illegible] "[illegible] TOGETHER" CAROL [illegible] SKIPPED [illegible]

(4)

(5)

(6) [illegible]

(7)

(8) DALE & RICK [illegible]

(9)

(10)

(11)

(12) RICK SHOWS UP

(13)

(14)

(15)

(16) RICK [illegible]? NIGHT TIME DALE + ANDREA IN WOODS [illegible]
GOING TO [illegible]

(17) CAROL [illegible]

(18) [illegible]

(19) CAROL [illegible]

(20) [illegible]

(21) [illegible]

(22) RACK ON THE ROAD. PEOPLE [illegible]

"[illegible]"

"[illegible]"

(23) [illegible]

[illegible]

GABE: "I FORGIVE YOU.. I KNOW [illegible] SCHOOL
HERE TO DO [illegible]
[illegible]
OF. I [illegible]

Holy heck, what a packed issue! Ben kills Billy. Carl kills Ben. Father Gabriel is introduced. Andrea finds the van. AND the Hunters are introduced! All in the same issue?! This is packed! PACKED!!

Things were really cooking in this era of THE WALKING DEAD, that's for sure. Very cool to be reliving this from an outside perspective. My favorite thing about doing long-running series is the drive to keep things evolving, always escalating, and trying to keep things fresh and engaging no matter how long the story runs. At this point, we'd run longer than most independent series ever got, and it's easy for an audience to get bored, so I was really trying to pump the gas and keep things going.

It helped that Charlie was absolutely hitting his stride around this time. Have I already commented on that before? Has Charlie been "hitting his stride" every ten issues or so? Maybe. He was always getting better. What a legend that guy is.

Anyway, this plot is a little sparse. When an issue has a lot of "events" it's really easy for me to block in and keep track of what goes where, so the plotting can be light like this. It all really falls into place when I have a lot going on.

In the top right, you'll see the word "Starship", I have ZERO recollection of what that's about. What a weird word to write up there. I'd love to say that I was considering putting a starship into the series at this point, because that would be hilarious, but alas, that was definitely not the case.

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR ALERT! Look at the bottom right. Some SPOILERS: "Gabriel kept people locked out of the church and let them die..." I'd already worked out Gabriel's backstory. But look at what follows! That's a whole plot for Gabriel that was completely thrown out. Rick was going to kill Gabriel, thinking he worked for the Hunters! And look at the acceptance Gabriel was going to have in that moment. That would have been interesting. Kind of a shame that we lost this really, although I do love Gabriel's character and a lot would have been missed if we'd done this. Also, it's a little similar to Martinez's death, where Rick killed him to protect his people and that MIGHT not have been necessary.

Also, a little note for issue №62. Apparently, I thought it would be interesting if Glenn and Maggie decided they didn't want to ride the horses anymore because it was making them sore... don't think we ever used that plot beat. CUTTING ROOM FLOOR ALERT! Part 2!

PAGE NOTES:

1: That pretty much covers it.

2: That line of dialogue told me everything I needed to know for this scene. Andrea's line: "I don't even CARE what this van was used for before--look at that--mattresses!" is INSANE. I just wanted to acknowledge that. It makes me laugh... but WOW. Also, Carl quietly upset about skipping Christmas is pretty funny.

3: No clue what this was going to be. Michonne maybe too tired, asking someone else to kill zombies? Whatever it was, didn't get used.

4: Left blank and this became another Lori phone moment, to keep that story alive.

6: I think originally, I'd planned on showing Ben kill Billy as opposed to Andrea finding it after the fact.

8: I'd planned for things to be way more compact when I wrote this bit, but as you can see from the following blank pages, I already knew this big death would be a moment that could eat up pages with emotional real estate, so I gave myself room in the plot to just let things run.

12: This gets pushed back to page 14, and the argument over Ben just keeps on going. When issues were plotted this way, I'd just get into the script and let things go without any real concern for how long the scenes were. I'd say these issues are "easy" to write but that's not quite right. It's more like there's a narrative flow to them that keeps pulling things ahead, so it makes things go "fast", but it's not really easy because you have to kind of keep up with it -- if that makes sense. I remember the pressure of writing these scenes and making sure I got the dialogue down before I forget it because it's all just flowing. Those are the times where it feels like the characters are real and you're just doing your best to transcribe what they're saying. Those times are not often enough (for me at least), but are quite magical.

16: Looks like the plot aligns with the issue pretty tightly from here on out. This section was probably plotted backwards from page 22 to see how the page turn moments fall. The way that works is: I'd know the Hunters show up on page 22. And: Carl shoots Ben on a page turn, that has to fall with enough room to get to page 22 so that'll be on... page 18. Then everything else falls into place.

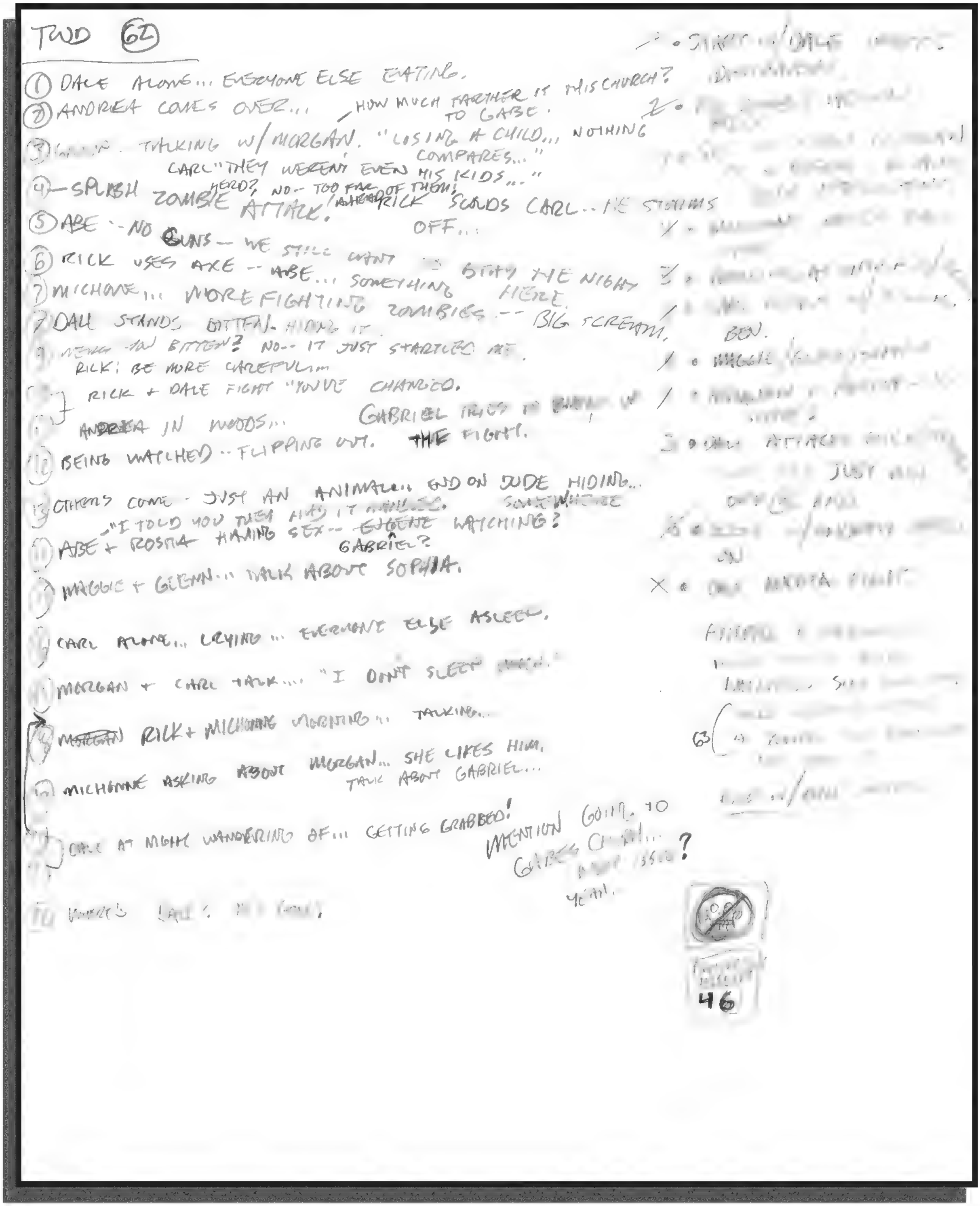
19: Probably the first time I've ever written something that was explicitly not supposed to appear on the page. In the end, while writing, I decided to have Carl sneaking into the tent ON panel, and have Morgan see him.

22: A very lowkey way to introduce the Hunters. A big turning point in the series, and their existence begins in plot form with "people watching."

ISSUE 62

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Whoa, look at this DENSE handwritten plot! Holy smokes.

On the right side of the page, you'll see a list of the plot beats I wanted to work into the issue. Why is that there? Well, sometimes I'd have a good solid idea of what needed to be in the issue, and I was worried I'd forget it along the way if I just dove into the full plot breakdown. So, I jotted down a quick list of beats to make sure I got them in without forgetting.

You'll see slashes over the numbers (which are out of order because I put them in order AFTER jotting them down) which was me eliminating them after I worked them into the plot.

At the bottom, you'll see an X over the number for "Dale Andrea fight." That didn't make it in.

In the bottom right, you'll see a little drawing for a "days without incident" sign. This might be the first note jotted down about the upcoming ALEXANDRIA storyline. Although, I don't think we used this sign at any point in Alexandria. Missed opportunity? Maybe.

It's funny that I would often jot down notes for storylines far down the road from the issue I was working on, but I would rarely consult old plots when working on an issue. So you'll see a lot of things that got lost in the shuffle along the way.

On the bottom, "Inv 14-15" either refers to those issues of INVINCIBLE, or those pages in some random issue of INVINCIBLE. I was working on these two series (as well as other books) concurrently at all times, so sometimes there'd be some cross-pollination in the plots.

PAGE NOTES:

1: Off to a great start.

2: This was crammed into page 1 to give me more room for all the business done in this packed issue.

3: This fell on page 3 as planned, but there was a whole new page with Gabriel added on page 2 to lead into this scene. You can follow the thread of this plot below this line. I crammed a bunch of page 3 business above the entry for page 4. You can see a lot of the Carl/Rick dialogue worked out. Also, the herd talk was moved to happen during the zombie attack.

4-7: You can see I don't really work out action scenes in the plot. They're pretty easy to break down in script form. That's where I work out the individual movements and how they break into panels. I don't really know a lot of writers who give artists "fight scene" as a script. I feel like most people probably think that's how that works. That's really lazy and disrespectful to the artist. I prefer to break down the action into individual beats that are broken into panels, and then allow them to add to and enhance what I've written. In plot form, though... I'm really just jotting down dialogue that will occur during the action, as you can see.

8: Oooh! Big spoilers for upcoming issues! Don't look! Don't look!

10: Rick and Dale fight was abandoned. It just didn't seem reasonable to have Rick do anything than be understanding when Dale snapped at him. Rick would understand the grief Dale was feeling. Also, I needed this page to have Rick confront Carl about his behavior, which was not something I'd planned for in the plot but was very necessary.

11: I think it's hilarious that in the final issue Andrea NEEDS to pee, wakes up to do so, and then doesn't. She just goes back to bed after hearing the hunter.

14: Holy heck! Look at that! The famous "Eugene is a pervert and watches Abraham and Rosita have sex and they let him" plot was almost given to Gabriel instead?! Whoa. That would have changed... a fair amount. Probably would have been less fun. It was an interesting character trait for Eugene, I feel less so for Gabriel. Probably why I kept it Eugene when it moved to script form.

17: Look at this, Carl/Morgan bonding time. I'm pretty sure that gets moved to a future issue. I believe I just ran out of room here, preferring instead to show everyone sleeping in their various states leading up to Dale's exit.

18-19: This scene was moved to 20-21 as marked in the plot.

20-21: Man... the rare time a page-turn moment landed on a right-hand page. Dale getting knocked out by the gun definitely should have been a page-turn moment, but y'know... sometimes there's just not enough room.

22: And a rare non-splash final page. It's funny, this almost feels like the first page of the next issue, to follow up on a final page of Dale getting taken by the hunters, which would have made this a splash final page. I wonder if that would have worked better. I don't know why I chose to do it this way. Interesting...

ISSUE 63

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

THUD (63) JULY FOOTPRINTS COVER.

(1)
(2)
(3)
(4)
(5)
(6)
(7)
(8)
(9)
(10)
(11) BACK ... [illegible]
(12) AZRIEL (13) [illegible] GABRIEL SAYING [illegible]
(13) RICK [illegible] JUST ... TO BE ALONE.
(14) ANDREW [illegible]
(15) [illegible]
(16) [illegible] GABRIEL SAYING "YOU'RE BEST STILL [illegible] TO ANSWER"
(17) [illegible]
(18)
(19)
(20) [illegible]
(21) [illegible] SO I [illegible]
(22)

64- EUGENE IS [illegible]

The curse of Ed Brubaker.

If you're reading this, you more than likely know who Ed Brubaker is, he's far more talented and far more popular than I. And he's a friend of mine, so I think it's fine to throw him under the bus here. I mean, it'll be fun.

I was talking to Ed on the phone one day and he said, "Well, I gotta go. I gotta get a few pages off to Sean before I wrap up today." My response was confusion. What does that mean? "A few pages?" Of script? Huh? Ed explained that due to his insane schedule with the dozens of books he was writing for Marvel, he had resorted to sending three to five page chunks of script to the artists to keep them busy and make sure they were never waiting for script.

Artists waiting for script is a bigger problem in comics than people realize. As much as people complain about "slow artists", I think people would be shocked to hear how often those delays are actually caused, or at the very least compounded by, "slow writers". I speak from experience... (sorry, artists).

So, this was mind blowing to me. You could... send an... unfinished script... to an artist? Before then, I'd never considered such a thing to be possible! This was... well, eye-opening... and it became a bit of a curse.

So from that time on, any time I was behind -- which was most of the time -- I sent scripts out in chunks. Most issues of, well, all my books, have worked that way ever since. Three pages here, five pages there. And every once in a great while... a window would open up, and I'd feel like an absolute champ to be turning in... a FULL SCRIPT! And man, I would feel like an absolute champion the few times I did that. The thing I should have been doing every time... and I felt like I deserved a parade when I did it. Poor Charlie Adlard probably got a full script... maybe ten times at best between issues №50 and №193 of this series.

These days I'm a little better and artists get full scripts or halves. I rarely turn in fewer than ten pages at a time. And I think the same is true of Ed post-Marvel. We're all more responsible these days. Maybe.

ANYWAY, that brings us to this issue. MAN, look at that plot with those ten empty pages! As I recall, this was because I was SO BEHIND (don't remember what else was going on, this might have been around the time my daughter was born--I think that lines up, actually. Yes, this issue was released July 2009 and my daughter was released in March of 2009, so there was a newborn at home when this issue was written). Where was I? I was SO BEHIND I didn't even have time to work on my plot. I just banged out three pages at a time to keep Charlie busy.

"Dale's gone. Okay... they go looking."

"Hmm. Andrea's frantic, she keeps yelling. This makes Abraham mad."

"Eugene is a man of science, maybe he talks to Gabriel about religion."

And things just rolled along that way until around page 10. Then I got my shit together and plotted out the rest of the issue as planned. I always knew what the ending of the issue was, so I felt comfortable just winging it for ten pages.

I mean, I'd been at this for six straight years by this point... I was getting comfortable.

Look at the bottom right: "64 - Eugene is killed?" Poor Eugene. So close to death... and it just never came.

PAGE NOTES:

1-10: Look how lazy I was.

11: "Pack up... leave." Left a lot of room for Andrea and Rick to talk and speculate about Gabriel, just to keep that (spoiler alert) misdirect going.

12: This was moved to one panel on page 13 to make room for a nice big drawing of a church (you're welcome.)

13: This page became pretty packed.

14: In the end we didn't really draw much attention to the shadow Andrea saw. I should have devoted more panels to it as this scene ends up being a little bit too much "tell" and not enough "show".

16: Punch becomes a shove and the gun to the head was deemed unnecessary.

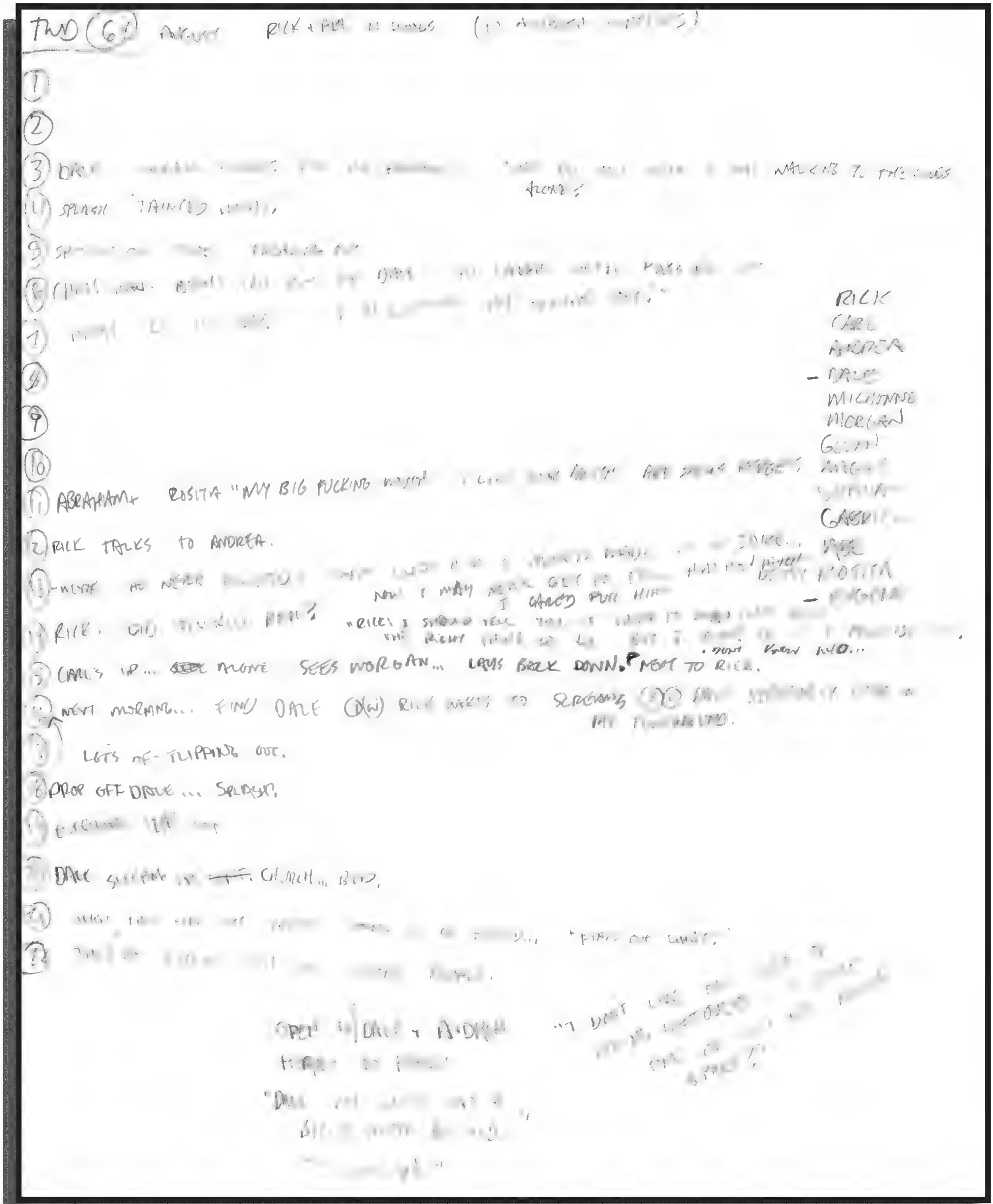
17: "Tells his story". I clearly knew the story and didn't bother to write it all down in plot form before typing it up.

18-19: Were left blank just to have room to fill things in and add scenes if needed. In the end, just needed a little simple wrap up to tee up the final scene introducing THE HUNTERS.

20-21: Just some general notes to set up the meandering dialogue that introduced Chris. He was supposed to be a little kinder, a little more personable than The Governor.

22: I knew the visual I wanted and just wrote the dialogue. Hopefully it's the simple and effecting ending we were going for. I know Charlie's drawing of that roasting leg still haunts me to this day. I feel like I can HEAR and SMELL it. Not that I know what cooking human flesh smells like... I swear... uh... let's end it there.

ISSUE 64
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman



Well, look at this. It's another one of those middle-chapter issues. I always had a lot of fun with the gross stuff in this book. Having the hunters talk about eating people and having them react to finding out Dale was bitten was a scene I was looking forward to writing for quite a while back then.

If there's one thing I've noticed about my work, reading this series over again and y'know, being older and looking back a little more often than I used to, it's that I really like to be direct and earnest. People in my comics tend to speak as plainly as I'd prefer people do in real life. This issue is a pretty good example of that.

The "horror" comes from how plainly and directly Chris discusses cannibalism. It's commonplace to him, nothing special or different, it's downright mundane. Yuck.

Anyway... that's fun to me.

Another plot with that handy character checklist going down the side. I have no idea why Dale and Eugene have dashes next to their names. Maybe it's just that I knew I had things for them in this issue first. Eugene doesn't do a whole lot, but it's possible some of the business he does next issue got moved back.

A couple dialogue notes for the next issue are at the bottom of the page. I only ended up using the leftovers line. Look for that next issue. Thankfully, I thought better than to have Dale disparage his dead wife to Andrea. That wouldn't have looked too great for him.

PAGE NOTES:

1-2: I knew I'd be building up to that big page 4, so I didn't have to spend any time actually plotting these pages on paper. As I explained last issue... there's a good chance they were already written and being drawn by Charlie by the time I was finishing plotting this issue.

3-6: This scene plays out pretty much exactly as plotted. "Tainted meat" is probably one of my favorite page-turn moments in the series. I think if I had it to do all over again, the AMAZING shot of Dale's manic face would have been the page 4 reveal. I mean, it's hard to beat looking past Dale's roasting leg to see him yelling at the hunters, but that expression Charlie captured on Dale's face was stunning and really set the scene and made it memorable.

7: "I'm cutting my tongue out!" I mean, that's all you need for the page right there. That does it. Sometimes these plots work as a checklist of cool memorable things. Is there a cool, memorable thing on every page? If not... try to get as close as you can. That was the goal. Some cool visual, some cool line of dialogue, an interesting moment, something. In that respect, this plotting style is really useful.

8-10: These are blank because I probably wrote them to keep Charlie busy as he caught up to me. Quite embarrassing, but that's how it was in those days (and not these days, no sirree). So, if you'll notice, they're quick one-page character moment scenes, just checking in, moving the plot forward, keeping things moving.

11-13: These were written to tie up the moments kicked off on pages 9 and 10. You can kind of see these pages as point, then counterpoint – if this, then that.

14: Rick's dialogue exactly as it appears in the comic is scrawled out here.

15: Trying to keep the "Morgan saw Carl kill Ben" subplot going a little longer...

OKAY, clearly this plot was done ALL out of order. Pages 18-22 were plotted pretty early on. I knew how the story was going to end, and these four pages of plot are roughly how the issue ends.

Page 18 got moved up to page 16. It looks like 17 and 19 are the same thing, but that's just because everything got moved up.

Glenn getting shot in the issue is something that really came up at the last minute. Originally, it was just supposed to be that Dale was dropped off and everyone panicked dealing with his return and what it could mean. At some point, I decided to heighten things with the "they're watching us" moment leading to Glenn getting shot.

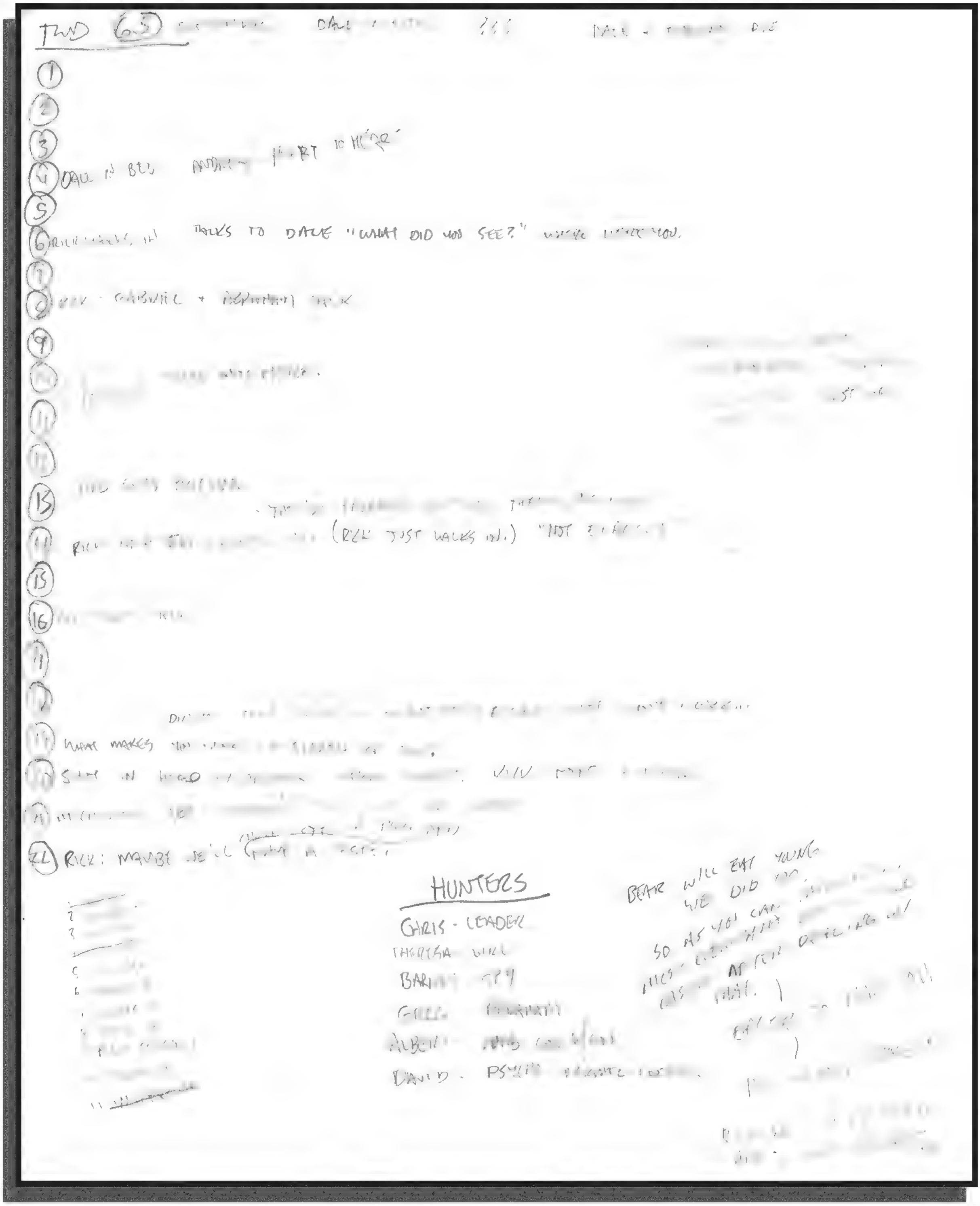
I mean... it made things more exciting!

21-22: It's not often you get to end an issue with a simple yet powerful dialogue exchange. Is this a tad too '80s action movie for you? I mean, I can't disagree with you... but it still feels cool to me, at least a little.

ISSUE 65

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman



Okay, time to talk about Robert's "Philosophy on Writing 101". Interesting is better than real. I wanted to show that Eugene was a MacGyver genius who could do impressive on-the-fly stuff. So, I started researching the best way to treat a gunshot wound if you don't have access to medical assistance.

You know what the research told me?

"Wash it out with water to clean it and keep it clean and open to the air." (And probably a tourniquet, or something, to stop the bleeding, but I don't remember.)

What? That's totally boring! So this business with Eugene sealing tea leaves on the wound with hot wax to block out infection? Totally made-up... and fun fact, it would actually lead to a nasty infection that could lead to amputation. So don't follow Eugene's plan if you're ever in that situation!

So, while I get that there's a small percentage of the readers in the medical field or military who read this issue and thought, "Eugene is an idiot," to MOST readers, it seemed like a clever plan that proved Eugene's intelligence. When if he'd just washed it out with water... well, it wouldn't have been an exciting scene.

I'm really happy with how this story unfolded. After all that business with the Governor, this storyline was all about seemingly setting up the new threat but showing that Rick and crew are capable of handling it quickly. They're dangerous now. They're changing and evolving... they're learning. Pretty cool.

In the not-pretty-cool department, let's talk about the gun-fingers-plus-sniper bit. Near as I can tell, it was first done by Andy Diggle and Jock in *The Losers*, a comic that started the same year as this series, but the scene in question saw print prior to this scene. I read *The Losers*, it's a great comic, and I highly recommend it. I wrote the scene this issue thinking I'd come up with it all on my own, but the scene from *The Losers* had to be rattling around in my head somewhere. So, it wasn't a deliberate lift, but you can't deny Andy and Jock did it first (and probably better).

It later appeared in *Crank*, the excellent Jason Statham movie, and eventually in *The Losers* movie in 2010, and shortly thereafter in *The Expendables 2* in 2012. It's quite a popular gag.

If it occurred in pop culture prior to *The Losers* comic, I'm unaware of it. So, I give full credit to Andy Diggle and Jock.

And I apologize for the accidental lift. We did NOT do the scene in the TV show for that reason.

OKAY... lots to write about this issue. Sheesh. Let's check out this plot. Holy heck, another instance of Eugene being marked for death at the top. I'm starting to think Eugene escaped death more times than TV Carol. Did I ever reveal there was about an hour where Daryl Dixon was dying in episode 4 of season 1? What a mistake that would have been!

Check out the bottom of this plot on the left, ooooooh what a time this was. Checklist for other scripts that needed to be written on a TWD plot. INVINCIBLE №64, 65, and 66 were all being written simultaneously because Cory Walker was coming back for a couple of issues, and I had to keep Ryan and him busy. Fun fact, this was when THE WALKING DEAD, which started ten months after INVINCIBLE, was catching up and passing that series. It seems both issue №65s shipped in the same month, then THE WALKING DEAD would leave INVINCIBLE in the dust. The power of Charlie Adlard. I was also somehow writing THE ASTOUNDING WOLF-MAN, *Haunt*, *Image United*, *and Pilot Season* (for Top Cow) all at the same time? When I first became an Image partner, I went Image crazy, wanting to write for all the founders. It was a fun... but busy time. Oh, the work I could get done when I wasn't stopping to work on TV scripts constantly...

Funny that I took the time to name all the hunters and give them personalities an issue before they all (spoilers) die. Also... Greg's distinction was "Abraham". Hilarious. Was I saying he was like Abraham? By the way, I had to note to myself that Theresa was a girl? Okay. Embarrassing. Group of six, and there was only one of those? Nice work, stupid past Robert.

Bottom right corner is devoted to scrawling down Chris's speech to Rick. I think it's a little mundane and kind of goes on too long, but the goal there was it was supposed to feel like I was setting up another big villain. The whole thing was meant to be a misdirect.

PAGE NOTES:

1-3: Good thing I had a lot to talk about before this section. There's probably going to be a lot of plots that don't have anything for the opening pages since those were written ahead of the plot to keep Charlie working. As I've discussed.

4-8: VERY close to the plot.

10-11: Have we discussed this, and I've forgotten? Look, that's going to happen. Sometimes I just need to draw out the page layout I'm picturing... that tells me what the scene is.

14: Correcting myself instead of erasing. Classic.

16: Clearly, I was just running wild in the script by this point, letting Chris ramble and eat up pages.

20: Thought it'd be cooler to show how good Andrea is with a rifle to have her shoot the ear off instead of the head. Never mind how specific the angle would need to be to accomplish this. Still fun!

21: Decided to take the finger off on this page. Better to save the Abe, Michonne, and Andrea reveal for the page turn.

22: Look, it's a bit of a lame cliffhanger. I had no intention of ever having our heroes turn cannibal. Ending the issue on a moment where Rick and crew are in complete control and have overpowered the Hunters easily was really the cliffhanger. Sweetening the pot with that dialogue might have not been necessary. It's really just Rick messing with Chris, trying to torment him. But I did worry it would make people think Rick and crew were turning cannibal and becoming bad guys, but I risked it because it is a cool moment, and above all else... end on a cool moment.

ISSUE 66

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

TWD (66) OCTOBER GROUP IN SILHOUETTE

KIRK [illegible]

(1) TALK TO CHRIS.

(2) [illegible]

(3) [illegible]

(4) GABRIEL CRYING... [illegible] SHOULD.

(5) [illegible]

(6) RICK + ABE TALK. [illegible]

(7) MORE TALKING... [illegible] SWORD.

(8)

(9)

(10)

(11)

(12)

(13) [illegible] DAD?"

(14) DALE ~~STES~~ IN SCOOT [illegible]

(15) [illegible] & THIS [illegible]

(16) NO [illegible]

(17) [illegible] END ON [illegible]

(18)

(19) [illegible]

(20) RICK CRYING-- THINKS ABRAHAM WALKS UP "I DON'T THINK [illegible] WOULD BE ABLE TO LOOK
ITS CARL AT ME... NOT AFTER WHAT I'VE DONE...
NOT ~~AFTER~~ IF HE KNEW.

(21) DAD...

(22) "I KILLED BEN."

EUGENE DEAD.
DECIDE TO GO TO
D.C. ANYWAY.

(1) [illegible] TO INTRO
(2) [illegible]
(3) [illegible]

This is quite an issue. From the pages and pages of silent scenes to open it, all the way to the emotional scene with Carl at the end, it all really comes together. The opening scene especially is just a great example of the power of collaboration in comics. Charlie was able to achieve such an insanely specific mood in that scene. The two-page spread of Rick's head is so great. Look at that face, he's just won, and he is horrified by what he knows he's about to do.

I've talked about two-page spreads of heads in FIRE POWER, but I don't believe I've discussed it here. They're my favorite thing ever. The Image guys in the '90s did it all the time. I just love them. They're great for deadlines, artists love drawing them, and they are just the best for dramatic moments that punctuate a scene. Want to show the weight of a moment? Give it a two-page spread of a head. You can't find a better trick in comics. I try to put them in every series I ever do... sometimes more than one. In the case of INVINCIBLE and this series... dozens. I love them so much. I wish it was mandatory to put one in every single issue of every single comic.

Okay... let's look at this plot.

"Group in silhouette", just me reminding myself what's on the already-drawn-in-advance cover.

"Kirk Mann", I used to sign my art this way for a short time when I drew in my teens. Like my last name was my whole name. I don't know why I thought that was cool. I was probably telling someone in the studio about this and wrote it out. At this time, I believe I was sharing a studio in Lexington, Kentucky, with Cory Walker and Nate Bellegarde. I was outnumbered by artists.

"Eugene Dead. Decide to go to DC anyway." HA! Holy crap, did I want to kill this guy so badly. Eugene lives!

Another checklist at the bottom. "Covers to Image" would have been soliciting future issues in the distributor catalog. "Inv 64 to Image" meant... "write the letters column." Benito Cereno and Nate Bellegarde were doing the *Atom Eve & Rex Splode* mini at the time, so I had to write myself a note to remind myself to read over the script for issue 3.

Otherwise... a pretty lean plot this issue. I believe that's typical for the "end of trade paperback" issues.

PAGE NOTES:

2-3: Okay... so right off the bat, look how much this issue changed from the plot. "Blood + Gore... dead." That was ALL supposed to take place on these two pages. Instead, I took what was meant to be two pages and turned them into EIGHT. Just really took that scene and ran with it. I really kind of played it fast and loose with this plot, sort of bouncing around here and there, as we'll see when we go further.

4: This wasn't given a whole page.

5: This was turned into the fourth spread in the sequence.

6: This ended up on page 10.

7: It's a shame that we lost the moment of Michonne wiping her sword clean. I don't feel like that's something we see enough in this series.

8-12: So, I'm skipping ahead since I expanded that opening scene so much, hence all the blank pages.

13: Now we're lining back up with the plot. Rick is back, but he's shaken by what he did.

14-15: Added a lot to this scene in the script, but it's a bummer to lose "Send Andrea in... and don't look so sad... I've got a few more days in me." I like him trying to keep Rick from making Andrea worry more. Oh, well.

16: Oh, the food talk...

17: I suppose it's always effective, but the silent moment dealing with the death punctuated by the distant gunshot has been done so much in the comics, video games, and multiple TV shows it kind of bugs me now. But these were the early days, and it wasn't quite done to death yet.

18-19: Funeral... it did get to a point where these scenes almost wrote themselves after a while. The struggle was to make them all at least subtly different in some way.

20-22: For scenes like this, I just needed a rough roadmap in the plot. The pacing of the moments gets worked out pretty easily in script form. I hope it wasn't too obvious that it wasn't Abraham he was talking to, for anyone reading this for the first time. Kudos to young Kirkman for the dense cliffhanger moment. Carl hearing this from Rick and them facing each other would have been enough of a moment to end the issue. Imagine it without that dialogue balloon, still works. But the punch of Carl saying, "I killed Ben" in that moment really drives home the emotions of the moment. And man, Charlie just nailed all those facial expressions perfectly. Nice cliffhanger ending.

ISSUE 67

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD (67) NOVEMBER

1. CU ON RICK. "FUCK." LONG HAIR -- BEARD.
2. ZOMBIES.
3. [illegible]
4. (10) [illegible] TELLING CARL TO GO BACK DOWN HILL. "HOW MANY?" RICK: "YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
5. [illegible] CARL [illegible] THEY DIDN'T SEE ME OR ANYTHING. [illegible] TALK.
6. RICK: "[illegible] DID YOU KILL HIM?"
7. [illegible] CARL ABOUT KILLING BILLY.
8. I [illegible] BUT I'M STRONG. [illegible] CAN DO IT.
9. [illegible]
10. ARRIVE GROUP [illegible] SINCE [illegible] BACK YET.
11. THINK ABOUT ALL THE FOLKS THEY GOT.
12. [illegible] TO EUGENE
13. STRUGGLE.
14. BATTERY GONE.
15. RICK [illegible] "DALE DIED FOR THIS.
16. ABRAHAM [illegible]
17. ALL HAD [illegible] TELLING...
18. [illegible]
19. [illegible]
20.
21.
22.

RICK DISCOVERS EUGENE IS FULL OF SHIT

EUGENE GOES TO ABE. ABE KNEW + WAS HIDING

RICK: DALE DIED FOR THIS!"

ABE: "CAN'T DO THAT. WHO KNOWS HOW MANY WE SAVED BY BEING ON THE MOVE. [illegible] CAN'T KNOW...

CARL NAILED CONSTR.

Well, a quiet issue, but an emotional one with some big important scenes. Carl and Rick finally discussed Ben's murder, everyone found out the truth about Eugene, and we even got the introduction of Aaron.

The Carl and Rick conversation was important because I wanted people to know that Carl wasn't crazy, he wasn't turning into Ben 2.0 or anything like that. He was maturing, becoming more like his father, and that has a dark edge to it in the world of THE WALKING DEAD. It's a world where responsibility sometimes means the ability to murder. And the real tragedy is how quickly it's happening to Carl, how young he is while dealing with all these kinds of moral conflicts that society protects us from.

Reading over the Eugene revelation in this issue, I probably would have devoted more space to it if I were to write it today. I would have built to the revelation slower, and the resulting reactions by all would have been bigger. And it's funny because while I know I would have handled it much differently now, I honestly can't decide which one would be the better method. Maybe zipping through it and getting past was the way to go... and I waste too much time now? Who knows. These entries are really making me analyze my writing quite a bit, and it's fun... and also not fun.

It'll be cool when we get to the later issues that are closer to how I write now, and I can see if they're better or worse. Oh, dear.

The plot itself, over there to the left, is pretty straightforward.

You can see my list of plot points for the issue in the top right area. This was written first. And you can see that I had Abraham as the level-headed one at first, and then realized that's not really how his character behaves. Don't know why I lost Rick's "Dale died for this!" Maybe that comes up later.

Notice "Carl Halloween cover." below that. I was already laying the groundwork for the upcoming Alexandria arc.

PAGE NOTES:

1-3: I LOVE it any time I can start an issue with the "*Savage Dragon* method" (which is really the Jack Kirby/Kamandi method) of starting a comic with a splash page followed by a two-page spread. These kinds of openings are visual and cool and energetic, and get you deep into the issue quickly. You're on page 4 before things slow down, and you dive into the story. The truth of the matter is, they're very fast to write, and it gets Charlie Adlard working while I figure out the rest of the script. So, they really do work for a number of reasons. I wish I could have done them every issue, but if you pay attention, I'm pretty sure I try to start every trade paperback with a pretty open scene like this. Obviously, opening with the long hair and the beard on Rick was to show that some time has passed since issue №66.

4-9: This all ended up pretty much exactly as plotted. You can see how shorthand, like on page 8, "I cry every night... but I'm strong. I can do it." is really all I need to remind me what's being said in this scene. Everything that's said on page 8 either supports that idea or is a reaction to that idea. So even if I've forgotten all kinds of other things I'd planned to say in that scene, if I have this bit here... it all comes back to me when I'm writing. (Or at least it feels like it.) I say a lot that I'm older now, and my memory doesn't work as well, so I keep much more detailed notes in my plots. I write out whole scenes most of the time. But the thing is... I was doing so much less back then. So it's harder to hold everything in my head now because I'm doing so much stuff both in and outside of comics.

15: Ah... now I see why I lost "Dale died for this!" The rollout of this scene that I thought was fast was actually much faster in the plot. I realized I needed more time to get to the point where Eugene would confess. Honestly, I still feel like I needed more time. It's the nature of monthly comics, so it's not a bad thing really, but this is a byproduct of writing as you go. If I hadn't written that three-page opening that covered so little ground, I would have had more room later to spend with Eugene... but then the issue wouldn't open with those stunning visuals that set the advancement of time and propel the story forward in a momentous way. So, it's a tradeoff... and now I'm starting to think I made the right choice. Go, young me!

20-22: This plot wasn't altered very much at all when I moved to the script stage. It was all pretty well laid out on paper, especially the page-to-page structure. But then, when it came time to plot out Aaron's arrival... I just winged it. Now, I don't remember this for sure, but I know there were MANY issues where, while I was plotting them, I'd leave the last three pages blank in the plot... because I didn't have a good enough cliffhanger moment yet. I would usually have a few options but didn't think any of them were good enough to settle on. You should eventually see some plots where there are three different endings planned, two of which I never did. So it's possible that while I was writing this issue, I decided, "Heck, I guess it's time to introduce Aaron." I knew he'd be approaching them like this, I just didn't know if it would be at the beginning, middle, or end of an issue.

ISSUE 68
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD (68) DECEMBER

AARON
ABE
ROSITA
EUGENE
MORGAN
MICHONNE
GABRIEL
MAGGIE
GLENN
RICK
CARL
ANDREA
SOPHIA.

1. TALKING
2. ATTACK AARON.
3. TIE HIM UP. HOW MANY ARE IN YOUR GROUP? THIRTY-FIVE? FORTY?
4. HEAD HIM OUT! HE COULD BE TELLING ME TRUTH!
5. CARL: "I DON'T TRUST HIM."
6. ZOMBIES ATTACK... ACTION
7. ACTION.
8. UNTIE ME, GOOD DAMN IT! SOMEONE helps AARON
9. KILLING ZOMBIES.
10.
11.
12. MICHONNE FUCK THAT... IM GOING W/HIM,
13. AARON GIVES GUN BACK TALKS MORE ABOUT GROUP,
14. MICHONNE "FUCK THAT... IM GOING W/HIM.
15. EVERYONE ELSE AGREES.
16. ANDREA DRIVES VAN RICK TALKS,
17. MORE ANDREA TALK -- WHY'S HE STOPPING?
18. MEET AARON'S PARTNER. "REALLY AARON?" AN OVERACHIEVER?"
19. "HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THEM THROUGH THE CITY?" "I HAVE NO IDEA."
20. 21. EXPLAINS ROAD BLOCKS ALL THE PROBLEMS -- ETC.
22. ANY IDEAS? "YEAH."

THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE... IT'S A MORE THING.

"THESE PEOPLE ARE GREAT. TOUGH AS NAILS BUT GOOD AT THEIR JOBS. WE NEED THESE PEOPLE."

(LAST) DRIVING AWAY.

Aside from some cool zombie action, another fairly quiet issue. I've always been fascinated by fans' complaints of so-called "filler issues" or "filler episodes" when it comes to TV. I understand that there are bad comics and bad shows, and sometimes those things have bad episodes that seem pointless. I don't think anyone along the way thought, "Eh, let's just punt and do a filler story."

I can see how a quiet issue like this one can seem like filler, but honestly, they're absolutely essential to the overall story. They're the reason the "big" issues pack as much punch as they do. A lot is being done in this issue to set up Aaron to solidify the stances and mindsets of Abraham, Rick, Andrea, and the rest. The distrust, the reluctance, and in Andrea's case, the reckless indifference to Aaron's proposal, all work to set the stage for what's to come.

Sorry to hop on a soapbox for a moment there. Everyone is entitled to their opinions. But from a writer's point of view, it is sometimes frustrating to see some fans not getting that those big events that pack tension, excitement, and terror into an episode would never have the impact they have if it weren't for all those quiet character moments you experienced before.

Anyway, plot time.

You'll see a handy character list on the top right. Once again, that's me taking a second to remind myself who is in this comic to make sure no character gets forgotten. I will say, these lists were mostly done off the top of my head, so I did always remember the characters.

Seeing these lists now, you can see how I'm blocking characters together, and that might be spoilers in some form if you're paying attention to who gets grouped with who. For instance, Andrea is already being blocked in with Rick and Carl. But that may just be because they have a pretty big scene together in this issue.

For some reason, and I don't recall why, I did a layout of the 10-11 two-page spread. More about that in the page notes.

At some point, I started logging the month that the issue was set to ship next to the issue number up top. This issue was to be released in December. I did this to make sure I was staying ahead of schedule at first. For instance, if I was plotting this issue in August or September, things were going great. If it was October... I was cutting things a little close. With Charlie being lightning fast, I don't think it was much of a concern. With this series especially, the point of this was probably a morale boost for me. "Holy heck, I'm plotting the December book in June!" There was a point toward the end of the series when Charlie and I were running a full year ahead of schedule. That's how we were able to do double and triple-sized issues at random and still stay monthly. That Charlie Adlard, just the greatest.

PAGE NOTES:

2-3: I don't, for the life of me, recall why I made this a two-page spread. It would have worked just as well as a splash page next to a four-panel page. If anything, handling things this way makes Rick punching Aaron have less of an impact. I don't really know what I was thinking. Now, I'm a HUGE fan of super complicated two-page spreads with a ton of panels that cram three pages worth of content on two pages. It's not something artists like, so I try to do it sparingly. But... this isn't that. So it's a real head-scratcher.

4: "Hear him out! He could be telling the truth!" I think this was meant to be a Glenn line. I'd wager I cut it because I didn't want to pull authority away from Rick. It's always better to have your main character making the right decisions, for the most part.

5: Carl: "I don't trust him." Another moment just cast aside. So far it seems like a lot of this plot was just not used in the issue.

6-7: One fun aspect of this book was the fact that zombies could attack at any time. They could interrupt any scene and spice things up. Good times.

8: "Someone helps Aaron" turned out to be Glenn. That was very in character for him, and I feel like it had been some time since Glenn got a good moment like this. Good timing.

10-11: Nothing written here, but I did draw that little layout of the spread instead. I don't recall why I did that. I know I didn't need to. I'm pretty sure I didn't even show it to Charlie. It was just for me to use to write the description from. That high horizon line and sea of zombies in the foreground leading back to them was really important to me for some reason. Oh, well... I guess sometimes I get a visual image in my head, and I just really want to make sure it gets into the issue. I dunno.

12: That got moved back all the way to page 14.

13: This was moved up.

14: Ha... I just wrote it all out again in the plot. Hilarious.

15: "Everyone else agrees". When an issue is mostly conversations these plots can be somewhat dull, but again, I'm just writing notes to give myself reminders of what the scenes are built around.

20-21: Holy heck, the original ending of this issue was going to be a discussion on the logistics of roadblocks and the various problems of getting "through the city." Which I assume was Washington, D.C. Man... glad I shifted gears and went with something else.

22: Yeah. Not the greatest cliffhanger imaginable. Thankfully, I thought better of it.

ISSUE 69

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

with Robert Kirkman

THE WALKING DEAD (69) JANUARY

FLARE GO HELP SOMEONE IN WASHINGTON..? & RUNNER GLENN W/ WORK WITH LATER.

LEG BROKEN RICK WANTS TO LEAVE HIM. HE'LL GET INFECTED! HE'LL DIE ANYWAY!

1. GETTING IN CAR W/ ANDREA?
2.
3.
4. WASHINGTON
5.
6. FLARE?
7. ANDREA - WATCH CARL! KEEP HIM SAFE! CARRY HIM? LETS TAKE THE VAN!
8. VAN DRIVING ... SEEING ZOMBIES - LOTS OF THEM.
9. SPRAWL? THERE HE IS.
10. RICK SUGGESTS LEAVING HIM...
11. ARGUING ... RICK SHOCKED "WE HAVE THREE DOCTORS & 1 IS SURGEON!
12. ZOMBIES
13. OVERWHELMED...
14. GUN SQUAD SHOWS UP. MOTORCYCLES...
15. LET'S GO! THIS PLACE WILL BE SWARMED IN AN HOUR.
16. LEAVING -- COOL SHOT OF DC IN SHAMBLES. RICK! JESUS. I ALWAYS WANTED TO COME HERE...
17.
18. MEET BACK UP WITH THE GROUP...
19. TRAVEL
20. SPRAWL - ARRIVE WELCOMED.
21.
22. CU ON RICK - SMILING! WOW!

END ON RICK CRYING...
WHAT'S WRONG?
I'M HAPPY.

Finally, we get to Alexandria. And we have a rip-roaring exciting issue. And FINALLY, the arrival in Washington D.C.

If you were reading this book monthly as it came out, while ALSO paying attention to the marketing of the book, particularly around San Diego Comic-Con, you'd be wondering, "Why is it taking so long for them to get to Washington?" Charlie's cover for this issue, featuring the Capitol Building, was drawn and shown at San Diego Comic-Con over a YEAR before this issue came out. This issue shipped in January of 2010, and this cover was used for a print that was given out at Comic-Con 2008!

Doing a long-term monthly comic that is designed to last for years and years is obviously a challenge; that's why it's so rarely done. The key, though... keeping it in the public eye. Eric Stephenson and I were on the phone multiple times a week brainstorming ways to keep marketing this book and INVINCIBLE. All the different titled storylines, teaser campaigns, specially priced issues, and various other "stunts" that were done over the course of this series were cooked up on those calls.

Comic-Con was coming up, and I wanted to be able to promote something. While on the phone with Eric, he asked what was coming up in the book, and I said, "We'll eventually be going to Washington." Well, that was that, and I was emailing Charlie Adlard to get the cover to this issue drawn so that we could do a print to give away at the Image booth and the panel where we announced this upcoming storyline.

When you need to keep sales up so you can do nearly 200 issues of a comic... you don't need a reason to promote it, only an excuse. The flimsier, the better!

This was almost two years before the TV show, mind you. That said, the book was solidly a success almost from the beginning. But no matter how good a book is selling, it could always be selling better, so Eric and I were always trying to figure out things that would keep the sales rising, and when things worked, Image could deploy those tactics on other books in the hopes of the same results. Which sometimes happened and sometimes didn't.

Now to the plot. Okay, pretty clean. I clearly knew what this issue was. Little plot for the issue in the top right. Followed that pretty closely. The planned ending at the bottom of the page, that changed a bit... although I'm pretty sure I used the crying Rick moment somewhere else.

PAGE NOTES:

1-3: Light plans for the start of the issue as, again, these pages were probably written quickly after I finished writing issue №68, to keep Charlie busy before I even plotted the rest of the issue.

4-5: The arrival in the Washington area deserved a two-page spread.

6: Flare? Good shorthand. I'm not asking myself if the flare goes there. I'm indicating that Rick is asking about the flare.

7: All pretty much exactly as plotted here.

8-11: All pretty much the same in the final version. Rick suggesting leaving Scott behind seemed pretty harsh, but it sets up the dynamic between Rick's group and the people of Alexandria that drives this whole arc.

12: Man, I kind of wish this group was officially called "gun squad." Kind of a bummer this was only in the plot.

16-17: Okay, full disclosure... not a lot to talk about here. Nothing really. This plot was not changed at all. Sorry.

18-19: I do love how compacted you can make comic book pacing. Meet up with the group. Hit the road. Travel. Get to Alexandria. All in the span of two pages, and it works.

20-21: Well, okay... they were going to be welcomed on this spread, but that didn't happen. There's a change. There's just a guy seen pulling open the gate and otherwise, Alexandria looks empty. Safe. Pristine. But empty.

22: Pretty cool to have an issue that just ends with Rick smiling. Happy. It shows just how much this book has evolved. This kind of ending probably seemed impossible twenty or even just ten issues ago. And this was just the beginning of the massive changes the book would go through over the next few arcs.